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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXII.

SEPTEMBER, 1908.

No. 2.



CHAPTER I.



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AYDEN was back in New York again after several years spent in the uttermost parts of the earth. He had been building railroads in South America, Africa, and China, and had maintained

so many lodges in this or that wilderness that he really feared he might be curiously awkward in adapting himself to the conventional requirements of civilization. In his long roundabout journey home he had stopped for a few weeks in both London and Paris; but to his mental discomfort, they had but served to accentuate his loneliness and whet his longings for the dear, unforgotten life of his native city, that intimate, easy existence, wherein relatives, not too near, congenial friends and familiar haunts played so important a part.

On the journey from London he had felt like a boy coming home for the most delightful holidays after a long period in school, and to calm and render more normal his elation, he told himself frequently as he drew nearer his native shores that he was letting himself in for a terrible disappointment; that all this happy anticipation, this belief, an intuition almost, that some delightful surprise awaited him, was the result of many lonely musings under the cold remote stars in virgin forests and wide deserts, a fleeting mirage born of nostalgia.

But all these cautions and warnings and efforts to stifle this irrepressible and joyous expectation were quite unavailing and, as he decided after he had been home a week, equally unnecessary, for the unaccustomed, piquant sense of anticipation remained with him and gave a flavor to his days which in themselves were not lacking in flavor; for merely to look, to loiter, to play at an exquisite and to him exotic leisure was infinitely agreeable. The more delightful, indeed, because it was merely temporary. Hayden had come to New York with a definite purpose in view and his recreations were purely inci-

His cousin, Kitty Hampton, was expressing her envy of him one winter morning as they were strolling down the Avenue together. Now it should be explained that Mrs. Warren Hampton, even if she were small to insignificance and blond to towness, thus increasing her resemblance to a naughty little boy,

was nevertheless a very important person socially.

"I wish I could get up some of your nice, fresh enthusiasm, Robert," she said discontentedly. "Everything seems

awfully stupid to me."

"That's because you've no imagination, Kitty. Fancy this seeming stu-pid!" He drew in the cold air of the sparkling morning with a long breath of satisfaction. "If your eyes had been traveling over the glare of unpeopled deserts or plunging into the gloom of tangled forests for several years, you would think people and all this glitter and life and motion a very delightful change. Why, everywhere I look I see wonders. I expect anything to happen. Really, it would not surprise me in the least to turn a corner and meet a fairy princess any minute.'

Kitty fell in with what she supposed was his mood. "We will turn the very next corner and see," she said. "But how will you know her even if we

should meet her."

"I shall know her, never fear," ne affirmed triumphantly, "whether she wear a shabby little gown, or gauzes and diamonds. I shall look into her eyes and know her at once.'

He was laughing and yet there was something in his voice, a sort of ring of hope or conviction, that caused Kitty to lift her pretty, sulky little face and look at him with a new interest.

"The fairy princess," she repeated slowly and quite seriously. enough, there should be one." gazed at him appraisingly: "Youngmoderately young and good-looking enough. You haven't got fat, and all that tan is becoming, and-how are you off anyway, Bobby ?

He looked down at her amusedly. "The fairy princess would never ask

that question.'

"Oh, yes, she would. Do not dream

that she wouldn't-to-day.

"Very well, then. To be perfectly truthful, I have 'opes. I believe I have found my pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Yes, I do. Oh, it's nothing very definite yet, but I believe, I truly believe I've struck it.'

"How?" she asked curiously.

"Ah, my dear, I'm not quite ready to tell. It's a romance, as you will agree when you hear it. What's the matter?"

For Kitty instead of showing any proper, consinly enthusiasm was looking at him with a frown of petulant

vexation.

"Then why couldn't you have come home six months, even three months earlier? Young, good-looking, and, as I now discover, rich, or about to be. Oh, it is too bad!"

He gazed at her in amazement. "My dear Kitty," in playful humility, "even if your flattering estimate of me is true, I don't see why you should be so disgruntled about it."

Her April face broke into smiles, and vet she sighed. "Oh, Bobby, because, because I'm afraid the fairy princess is bespoke. Yes," nodding at his astonishment, "I have a fairy princess in mind, one in whose welfare I am deep-

ly interested."

"Oh," comprehendingly, "one of your protégées, whom you are trying to marry off. I assure you once and for all, Kitty, that such will not do for me. I want the real thing in fairy princesses; under an enchantment, detained in the home of a wicked ogre; all that, you know, and lovely and forlorn."

She looked at him oddly. "If you only knew how you confirm my impres-

sion."

"Of what?"

She paid no attention to him. "I wish I knew certainly, but she won't tell until she gets ready, but it looks very much as if she were engaged to Wilfred Ames. You remember him, do you not?"

Havden thought deeply a moment. "A big fellow? Very light hair, blue

eyes?"

"Yes, yes," she nodded. "'the flanneled fool at the wicket, muddied oaf at the goal' type, you know. One of those lumbering, good-looking babies of men that women like Marcia Oldham always attract. Every one thinks it's an awfully good thing, and I dare say I'd agree with them, if you hadn't happened along. But his mother! My patience, his mother! And she's behaving like a cat about the whole affair. Just as if Marcia's mother were not enough! Oh," in a burst of impatience, "why do not things ever arrange themselves properly?"

He laughed, Kitty always made him laugh; but his curiosity was aroused sufficiently to ask: "Have I ever in my remote past met this paragon of a fairy

princess?"

"No-o, no. I don't believe you have. Her mother took her to Europe when she was quite young and she has lived over there most of her life."

"What is her name?" he asked idly.

"Marcia, Marcia Oldham."

"But Oldham," with more show of interest. "Oldham! I seem to remember that. Isn't her father an old cur-mudgeon of a millionaire?"

"He was before he went to smash and died," she returned briefly. "By the way, Bobby, don't you want to dine with me this evening. I'll be all alone. Warren is still in the West, you know. Dine with me, and we will go on to Bea Habersham's afterward."

"Thank you, Kitty dear, but I'm going to see Mary Garden in 'Thais,' this evening, so I'll be dining early. But why won't you take tea with me somewhere this afternoon, or else give me

a cup or so?"

"No. Cannot." She shook her head

decisively.

"Bridge?" he asked whimsically.

"For a wonder, no. Something far more interesting. I'm taking two women to a wonderful fortune-teller. Ouite the most remarkable creature you ever heard of. Why, Bea Habersham lost a big sapphire ring last week and this woman told her exactly where to find it, and Bea went right home and laid her hands on it."

"What's her name?" Where is she?" Hayden asked, with mock eagerness. "Perhaps she will find the fairy princess

for me.

They had reached Mrs. Hampton's home by this time, and she took occasion to look at him scornfully before entering. "Doubtless she will if you

pay her enough," she said. "And her name is— Oh," wrinkling her fore-head in perplexity, "I've got it down somewhere, but for the moment, it's gone out of my head. Mademoiselle-Mademoiselle- Oh, an odd name. remember it sooner or later. Good-by.

"Mademoiselle — Mademoisellehe teased her, imitating her voice. "Oh, an odd name." And he laughed. "But, Kitty, do beg her to find me the fairy

princess."

CHAPTER II.

When the curtain fell on the first act of "Thais," that evening, Hayden drew a long sigh. He had been enjoying it with that keen, pleasant appreciation, that bovish glow of enthusiasm which still remained with him. Then he turned his attention upon the house and amused himself by picking out an occasional familiar face, and admiring the carefully dressed heads and charming gowns of the women about him, and the whole brilliant flower-garden effect of the audience.

Presently, he noted with some surprise that in spite of a crowded house the two seats next him remained unoccupied; but just before the curtain rose again he turned his head suddenly to discover that one of the seats at least, the one farthest from him, was filled. The recognition of this fact came almost with a shock, a pleasurable shock, for the new arrival was a young and beautiful woman and his first feeling of surprise was shot with approbation at the noiselessness of her entrance, an approbation that he longed to express

She had slipped past several people. and taken her seat without any of the jingling of chains, rattling of draperies and dropping of small articles which usually proclaim the disturbing appearance of the late feminine arrival, and seem, in fact, her necessary concomitant. But this young woman who had so recently entered yet managed by some magic at her command to convey the impression of having been in her seat all evening.

Hayden hated to stare at her. He was, in fact, entirely too well bred to do anything of the sort, and yet, quite disgracefully, he longed to do nothing on earth so much, and further he was inclined to justify himself in this social lawlessness.

If women, either wilfully or unconsciously, succeeded in making pictures of themselves, they must expect to be gazed at. That was all there was to the matter. Only, and there was the rub, Hayden couldn't very well profit by the courage of his convictions, in spite of his truculent self-assurance, for the simple reason that he wasn't capable

of it.

The lady was, he decided by virtue of his stolen glances, about twenty-five years old, although her poise of manner indicated a composure beyond her years. And she was tall and slender, with a straight, regular profile, and dark hair which fell back from her face in soft natural waves, and was very simply arranged. She had, in fact, a simplicity, almost an austerity of what one might call personal effect, which formed a contrast, certainly interesting and to Hayden at least as certainly fascinating, between herself as she impressed one and her very elaborate and striking costume.

Her wonderful gown-even Hayden's untutored masculine senses appreciated its wonderfulness-was of some clinging green material which embraced her in certain faultless lines and folds of consummate art. About the hem it was embroidered with silver butterflies, irregularly disposed yet all seeming to flutter upward as if in the effort to reach her knees. These also decorated her low corsage and spread their wings upon her sleeves. She wore no jewels; and her only ornament was a large butterfly in silver, upon her breast, with diamond and ruby-studded wings and ruby eves.

A butterfly! Was he dreaming? Had he thought so much of butterflies that he saw them everywhere? For since his return from South America, Hayden had exhibited a marked interest in butterflies, although, curiously enough,

this enthusiasm was not in the least entomological.

But to return to the lady. One foot was thrust a little from her gown, and Hayden was quick to notice that it was encased in a green satin slipper with a buckle which was the exact replica of the butterfly on her breast, only smaller in size. The whole idea of her costume struck him as fanciful, original and charming; and then—and then—it was only a coincidence, of course; but it started a train of thought which gradually merged into giddier hopes.

His admiration seemed to be universal, at least within the confines of the opera-house, for it was evident that either the lady or her gown, or both, attracted a vast deal of attention to which she on her part was either entirely oblivious or else so accustomed as to be indifferent. At last, she turned toward Hayden a little with a slight change in her expression which he translated as annovance. He was at once overcome with a swift feeling of embarrassment, of compunction. seemed to him that he must have sat with his eyes riveted upon her. Resolutely, he turned them toward the stage until the poignant sweetness of the intermezzo began to dream through his consciousness as an echo of "that melody born of melody which melts the world into a sea," and then, involuntarily, without premeditation, obeying a seemingly enforced impulse, he had turned toward her and she had lifted her eyes, violet eyes, and touched with all regret; and a sudden surprised ecstasy had invaded every corner of his heart and filled it with sweetness and warmth, for the music, that enchanting, never-to-be-forgotten intermezzo, had revealed to him—the fairy princess.

In a moment that he dreamed not of, around some unexpected corner of life, she had turned her feet and he, crass fool that he was, was not sure that it was she; like all faithless generations, he had waited for a sign, until at last, in the ebb and flow of the music, she had lifted her sweet eyes and he had known her finally, irrevocably, and for-

He could not gratify his own insistent longing to move nearer her, or to gaze and gaze at her, so during the next act he confined his glances rigorously to the stage. Almost immediately, however, after the curtain fell, he happened to glance, by mere chance, toward one of the boxes, and his heart stood still, for there far back in the shadowy depths, she was standing talking earnestly to a dark, thin woman in rosecolor with drooping cerise wings in her shining black hair.

He turned involuntarily, half believing himself the victim of some hallucination and expecting to see her still sitting in her seat, only to find that she really had gone. For a moment, a cold chill ran down his back. How could she have vanished without his knowing it? It seemed incredible. What an uncanny way she had of coming and going. He glanced up at the box again where he fancied he had seen her; but the lady in cerise was now seated and talking to two or three men.

Good heavens! He began seriously to doubt the evidence of his senses. Had she, his fairy princess, ever really been in the house at all or had he dreamed her—her and her butterflies? Was she, after all, some fantasy born of the music and his dreaming imagination? And would it ever be possible to dream her again; or, if she were real, where, where could he find her? To discover a fairy princess and to lose her, lose her, as he ruefully confessed, like a needle in a haystack, was worse than never to have found her.

The final curtain fell. He rose with the rest of the house, dejectedly enough, let it be said, when glancing at his feet, he saw one of the small butterflies which had evidently fallen from her shoe. He almost shouted. Cinderella had left her glass slipper at the ball, or what, in this case, symbolized it, and he had found it. He slipped it carefully into his pocket and wasted no time in hastening home; but once in the seclusion of his own apartment, he drew it forth and carefully examined it. It was an exquisite trinket fashioned with infinite care and perfectly conceived,

with delicate threadlike antennæ, wings so thin as to be almost transparent, and ruby eyes. He smiled afresh with a sort of triumphant satisfaction.

Before him stretched a vista of golden opportunities, for this valuable and unique ornament must be returned. Naturally, it was a commission that he could entrust to no one but himself. Any one would concede that; and she, of course, in accepting it, would have to show a decent appreciation of his good offices; and they would probably discover mutual friends or acquaintances, or if they did not happen to possess such a thing as a friend or even an acquaintance in common, he would find exercise for his ingenuity by very speedily rectifying that difficulty. Either to invent or to discover some kind of a mutual friend or acquaintance was a task to which he felt himself fully equal, and with this comforting reflection uppermost in his mind, Hayden finally composed himself to slumber. Only, and this was his last conscious thought, he did wish she had looked happier. She was like a flower, exactly like the violets which had drooped below the silver butterfly on her breast.

"Oh, faint, delicious, springtime violet!" But again—that little pang was like a stab at his heart—he did wish that her sweet eyes had not been touched with all regret.

CHAPTER III.

He wasted no time, the next morning, in putting an advertisement in the "Lost and Found" columns of the various newspapers, signing his full name and address. Two lagging days passed, and then, just as hope was beginning to fade, he received a letter written in the third person, stating with what seemed to him rather cruel succinctness, that if Mr. Robert Hayden could find it convenient to be at the restaurant of the Gildersleeve Hotel that evening, the owner of the ornament described in his advertisement, namely a silver butterfly, would be there dining alone between the hours of eight and nine and would thus be able to receive her property in person.

With a vague feeling of disappointment through all his elation, Hayden turned the note over in his hand. At the head of the page was embossed a silver butterfly, but beyond this clue there was nothing to indicate the lady's identity; no name, no address. Again he read the brief words written in a clear, upright hand, which so plainly showed strength of character and unusual self-control, but gained no new light.

What an odd happening! He felt indefinably chilled. Why this appointment of meeting at one of the large hotels? Curious. Why this mystery, anyway, he thought irritably; why this excess of mystery? And yet, after all, he was forced to confess to his inmost soul that, mystery though it was, he did not find it any the less delightful for that, rather the more so.

He had never known so slow a day. The minutes lagged unaccountably, the hours crawled forward at the most snaillike pace, and his impatience at this was tempered to a satirical amusement by the fact that the entire world of his friends seemed banded together in a conspiracy to engage his society

for that particular evening.

He had, as night drew on, a breathless and excited sense of eluding and escaping them, and dressed with the emotions of the criminal who realizes that the sleuths are hard upon his trail. It is unnecessary to say that he was early at the Gildersleeve, and managed to secure a table which commanded a view of the entire room. He had an hour, and a half before eight o'clock, and he put as much of it in as possible in ordering a carefully chosen dinner, taking an incredible time over it, for, as the fever of his anticipation ran high, his manner became the more cool and leisurely, a temperamental trait of

He ate his soup as slowly as possible, and glanced about at the tables now rapidly filling up with all the laughing groups of men and women who would be going on to the theater and the opera a little later. The music was charmingly subdued; a whiff of fra-

grance from the flowers on his table reached him. He liked the atmosphere of this hotel, quiet, restful, and handsome after a restrained and sober fashion; and then, all at once, the surroundings, the groups at the tables, the waiters passing to and fro, the appealing music, the noise and hum of conversation lost life and motion and color, and became the mere tapestry against which she alone moved.

It was about half-after seven when the vigilant eye which Havden had kept so persistently upon the door was rewarded; but to his disappointment, she was not alone, but was accompanied by an elderly, gray-haired man. However, his spirit was somewhat restored by the fact that they took a table immediately within the line of his vision. She wore black to-night, gauzy and diaphanous black. A small black toque with some upstanding silver trimming rested on her hair, and the silver butterfly on her breast seemed to flutter its delicate, shining wings; but depending from it almost to her waist and encircling her neck, was an exquisite chain of small, enameled butterflies. They were in all shades of yellow and orange, with touches of black, and were held together by tiny, jeweled links. Butterflies, more butterflies! Could it be? Was it a possibility? Hayden cautioned himself lest his imagination ran away with him.

He could not fail to notice that here, as at the opera, she was again an object of interest. Every one in the room seemed to be either openly or furtively gazing at her. In this, he reflected, there was nothing very peculiar, as her beauty, which was sufficiently marked to compel interest anywhere, was not more noticeable than the unique and remarkably beautiful

ornaments she was wearing.

The man with her, unobtrusive and gray enough in all conscience to escape any attention whatever, yet made a peculiar impression on Hayden. As he sat, apparently ordering dinner in haste, with his watch in his hand, so to speak, Hayden was struck by the

deference he displayed to the lady he accompanied, and the lack of ease in his manner. He was like a man who had been unwittingly drawn into a situation which rendered him extremely uncomfortable, and he was distinctly not of her world. On the other hand, the lady of the silver butterfly, as Hayden was forced to call her, in lieu of any other name, exhibited her usual calm, unruffled composure.

Hayden could not notice that, watch her as closely as he would, she showed the least curiosity as to whether or not he was in the room. Not once did he succeed in surprising the smallest glance in his direction. Instead, for the most part, she talked earnestly to the man opposite, who had evidently ordered his dinner of dishes ready to be served, and was hastily consuming them, while she had given more time to her order, and did not really begin her dinner until her vis-à-vis had disposed of his. Then, with a final and hasty glance at his watch, the gray and elderly man arose, bowed awkwardly and formally to her and left the room.

The first course of the lady's dinner had just been placed before her, and Hayden could not fail to admire the way in which she bore herself; although, as at the opera, she must have been conscious of the many admiring eyes cast in her direction, she gave no evidence of it, and he was almost equally piqued by the fact that she manifested no apparent interest in his presence. Not once did she turn her head toward the door, not once did she incline her eyes in his direction.

She had just finished her soup when, the clock indicating one minute of eight, Hayden took a last sip of his black coffee, the last whiff of his cigarette, and walked down the room toward her. As he reached her table and stood before her, she looked up with a charming smile, which yet held a touch of shyness, an embarrassment she struggled to conceal, and nodded toward the chair so recently vacated by her elderly companion. To his surprise, Hayden saw that she was young-

er than he had at first thought her, and wondered afresh at her apparent isolation.

"Won't you sit there, please? You are very prompt. It is just eight o'clock."

He seated himself opposite her. "A proof of my desire to escape the responsibility of your ornament," he replied, taking from his pocket the box enclosing the silver butterfly and holding it out toward her.

"Oh, thank you." She laid it on the table beside her without opening it. "It is extremely good of you to forego any engagement you may have had merely to return this to me with your own hands." But although her words showed composure, her voice, the color that came and went, exhibited an agitation she could not wholly overcome.

"Good! Not at all," he returned.
"There may have been several reasons which would make me wish to deliver the buckle to you in person—its beauty and value for one thing; but to be perfectly frank, let me confess that there was one overmastering reason, that my interest in this matter has been enormously increased by one of the most potent of factors; a factor that might be called the greatest stimulant in the world to even a tepid interest."

She looked up at him with surprise, even, he fancied, a slight alarm. "What can you possibly mean?" she asked coldly.

He had leaned his arms upon the table, and now he smiled up at her like a mischievous, checky schoolboy. Even the most prejudiced person could not but acknowledge that Hayden had a most delightful smile.

"Mystery," he replied.

Her eyelashes lay on her cheek, long, black eyelashes on a cheek of cream, with the faintest, the very faintest stain of carnation. She was drawing designs on the table-cloth with her fork. She started slightly, but if she felt any perturbation of spirit, she gave no sign further of it, and yet Hayden knew instinctively and intuitively that

he had said just the thing he should have been most careful to avoid.

"Ah, yes," she said at last slowly.
"I dare say it does look like that. I
did not think of it in that way. I'm
afraid I was thinking only of expediency."

"And expediency to you apparently spells mystery to me," he said.

She made an impatient gesture. It struck him now that she was really annoyed. "I cannot help it if you see it that way." She strove to make her voice icy.

"Wouldn't any one?" he persisted.

"Perhaps." She appeared to waver. "You must admit," he continued, perversely pursuing the subject, "that you are rather mysterious yourself. Why, you appeared so suddenly and noiselessly beside me at the opera the other night—."

"My mother was to meet me there," she interrupted him, "but she disap-

pointed me."

"And then as equally suddenly and noiselessly you disappeared, that truly, if I had not found the buckle of your shoe, I would never afterward have been successful in assuring myself that you had really been there."

She looked at him now with a sparkle of amusement in her eyes, and he experienced a quick sense of delight that

violet eyes could be merry.

"Perhaps I was not really there at all," she laughed. It was evident that she had thrown aside the distrust and distress of a few moments before. "Listen"-leaning forward and speaking with more animation and assurance than she had yet shown-"I will construct a romance for you, a romance of mystery, since you seem determined to have mystery. Can you not fancy a woman young, eager, interested in all sorts of things, and shut off from them all, living somewhere in the depths of the woods and consumed with longing for the intense and changing life of the city, whose varied phases only seem the more vivid and interesting when heightened by distance; and she dreams of this-this lonely girl-until her longing becomes so great and so vast and overmastering that her thought goes slipping away—away from the gloomy woods to enjoy stolen, brief, bright glimpses of the world. Is that beyond your imagination?"

"It is not at all beyond my imagination," he said modestly, "but if you are trying to impress upon me the fact that you are no more real than my fancy has once or twice suggested, it brings up a nice moral question. Am I justified in handing over to a chilly ghost a valuable and beautiful ornament belonging to some one else?"

She laughed outright, frankly amused. "That is a question you will have to decide for yourself," she said demurely. "You can't expect me to

help you."

"Very well," he replied, with equal promptitude. "I refuse any further responsibility and leave it entirely to your conscience."

"Are you—do you live in New York?" The carnation deepened slightly in her cheek at this personal question.

"I was born here," he replied. "I've lived here all my life that I haven't been away from it." They both burst out laughing at this proof of his ancestry.

"Let's talk on the two most interesting subjects in the world," he said, leaning forward as if struck by a sudden inspiration, "yourself and myself. I will begin at the beginning and tell you everything I know or have ever heard about myself and then you do the same."

"But no one ever knows when to stop when he or she begins to talk about himself or herself," she objected, and again the shyness crept into her voice. "You will occupy a thousand and one nights in the recital, and you have only"—she glanced at a tiny watch—"you have only ten minutes."

"Must Cinderella leave the ball exactly on the stroke of nine?"

"Certainly. Her pumpkin coach awaits her at that hour, and you know what happens to the pumpkin coach and the coachman and footmen if she keeps them waiting a minute overtime."

He sighed. "Well, I see that I must

be dreadfully brief in what I have to say; and this is it. I have asked no reward for returning you your trinket, have I? But that does not absolve you from the courtesy of offering one; now, it seems to me that it is not at all amiss, in fact it is quite fitting that I should dictate the terms of it. I am sure that this attitude of mine appeals, if not to your generosity, to your sense of justice." He paused politely.

"I can at least see the position I put myself in if I decline to admit it," she

parried

"Oh, I am sure of your position," he assured her. "I take that for granted. No one with a spark of decent feeling could look at this matter except in one way. Now, you must admit that I have behaved beautifully. I have made no attempt to surprise your reticence, or even to discover vour name. Truly, I haven't made the faintest effort to entrap you into any revelations, have I? Now, I am sure that we must know quantities of the same people, and all I ask is that you mention some of your engagements to me for the coming Suppose, for instance, you fortnight. were to say: 'I am going to be at the Goddards to-morrow afternoon about five. Wednesday, I am to dine at the Symmeses. Thursday, at the Hamptons."

Did she give a little start, or was it his fancy? At any rate she followed him with unmistakable interest, and when he had finished she leaned back in her chair with a ripple of low

laughter.

"I do not believe we will begin that," she said. "It's like a game and we could go on indefinitely mentioning names on the strength of finding a mutual acquaintance. No, I am something of a fatalist. I think I will let events take their course. If we are to meet again, why, we are. If not, why, all our poor efforts cannot compass it. Ah, it is nine o'clock, on the very stroke! Good night." She smiled graciously, charmingly. "And thank you again for so kindly restoring my property."

It was a very distinct dismissal, Hayden rose at once. "But," he protested before he took a step to depart, "you cannot leave me this way. The only way I can think of you is as 'The Lady with the Butterflies,' and it is too cumbersome a title. It sounds like the name of a picture. It is such a catalogue-v title."

"It is really," she agreed with him. "There is no doubt about it. I am sorry," demurely, black lashes again on cheeks of cream, no, carnation. She did not mention her name and Hay-

den's face fell.

"I wonder if you know my cousin, Kitty Hampton," he said at a venture, "My pumpkin coach!" she exclaimed,

moving toward the door.

"But my reward!" he cried. "I refuse to let you go without bestowing it. It is not honest."

She sighed and she smiled, she flushed and wavered. "Then take this assurance," she said as one driven to a corner. "Believe me when I tell you that when you wish to see me I shall not be hard to find. I have reason to think that you will find it very easy."

CHAPTER IV.

Although Hayden proved himself reluctantly regardful of the butterfly lady's very evident desire to be left alone, he did not at once leave the hotel. Instead, he strolled into the office and after loitering about there for a few moments, he was just leaving when he encountered Penfield, Horace Penfield. Ordinarily, Hayden would have avoided him as he would fire and pestilence; but to-night he rather went out of his way to secure Penfield's society.

Penfield was a thin man with slightly stooping shoulders and a neck that craned forward. He had a long pale face as narrow as a wedge, a nose as sharp as a fox's, keen, ferretlike eyes, and white lashes. No longer young, he yet managed to achieve this effect and retain the manner of youth. His claims to social distinction rested on the solid basis of fear. He was a walking bureau of information, a daily newspaper. When the harsh vituperation of those who, having nothing more to lose, had

nothing more to gain, occasionally assailed him, he had been heard callously to assert that he preferred being dangerous to being ineffective, and that he would infinitely prefer to be a menace to society than its victim. In short, the profession of scandalmongering he pursued with concentration, finesse, and infinite tact. If for himself he achieved eminence, became master of his craft, it was doubtless sufficient recompense.

"Hello, Hayden," he said in his thin, satirical voice. "How are you and your

affairs 3"

"All right, I guess," said Hayden in-

differently.

For a season they talked on various subjects, falling gradually into a discussion of the merits of certain mining propositions, until Hayden said with premeditated suddenness:

"By the way, Penfield, have you ever heard of the Butterfly mine or estate?"

"The Butterfly!" repeated Penfield slowly. "The Butterfly!" He pinched his lower lip meditatively. "Let me see! One of those Mexican mines, isn't it? Or wait a moment," shrewdly. "I may have mines on the brain because we've been talking about them. Upon my word, Hayden," his face flushing with shame, his professional pride sadly wounded, "I'm awfully sorry; but to tell the truth, I can't just put my finger on it. Yet somewhere, lately I've heard of Did I read of it or hear people speaking of it?" He drew his hand over his brow looking really worried. "Come on and walk down the Avenue with me," he said. "Maybe the night air will refresh my memory, and I'll be able to think it out as we move along.

But the night air could hardly be regarded as a potent factor in restoring Penfield's recollections, for they walked some distance and he had succeeded in offering no answer to Hayden's question; and although he strove lightly to discuss the various topics which arose between them, he was manifestly so perturbed and dismayed that Hayden felt his contempt mitigated by a faint

feeling of pity.

Finally, when about to cross from

one side of the street to the other, they paused to give an oncoming motor the right of way. As it went flying past them, a woman leaned forward and bowed and smiled. It was the lady of the butterflies, and in the white light of the electric lamp Hayden saw seated beside her the same gray, elderly, unobtrusive man with whom she had entered the Gildersleeve.

"By George! Marcia Oldham!" cried

Penfield.

So it really was she! What luck to know for certain! Hayden exulted. Now Kitty Hampton would have an opportunity to prove that cousinly affection she was always assuring him of.

"You know her, of course?" asked

Penfield.

"I have recently met her," replied Havden briefly.

"Oueer thing about that family,"

meditated Penfield.

"Queer? How? What do you mean?" exclaimed Hayden involuntarily, although he bitterly reproached himself a moment later, for having, as he expressed it, so far forgotten himself as to ask any questions of Penfield.

Penfield chuckled, an arid, biting chuckle it was, too. His face brightened up, his crestfallen manner merged happily into jauntiness, his self-respect was restored. He was again the au-

thoritative gossip.

"You know, of course, of old Oldham. One of the millionaires of the last decade. Well, with changing times, changing methods of finance, he lost his grip, and about five years ago he died, heavily involved, leaving a widow and one young daughter, Marcia. Mrs. Oldham had been a Southern woman of the old régime, and was a pretty, absolutely helpless creature, and Marcia was still at school.

"Of course it raised a storm of talk. They had been used to every luxury, all the ease of wealth; they relied on the machinery, you know, to look after them, and it never entered into their heads that the wheels could stop. When they did stop, as you can imagine, every one was discussing the poor Oldhams. There were the greatest raising of

hands and lowering of voices and mopping of eyes whenever their names were mentioned." His arid chuckle seemed to strike Hayden like the spatter of hail.

"'What will become of them?' 'What can they do?' 'A helpless woman like Mrs. Oldham and a young daughter!" he mimicked feminine voices. "You heard that sort of thing bleated on every side. All of the women advanced positive opinions on just what they ought to do. The consensus of opinions, I believe, amounted to this, that it was the part of wisdom for the Oldhams to sell everything they had left and depart for some obscure German or French town where Marcia might perfect herself in the languages and fit herself for a nursery governess or

something of that kind.

"But"-again a fit of laughing which almost choked him-"to the disapproval, even horror and disgust of all kind friends, the eccentric Oldhams did nothing of the kind. They went along as they always had, and certainly they did not then display nor ever have displayed any lack of money. They live simply, entertain very little; but Marcia who is considered a beauty goes out constantly. She is seen everywhere, dresses quite as well as her school friends, Kitty Hampton and Bea Habersham, with whom she always appears, and who, as of course you know, have both married an enormous amount of money. Her extravagance is hardly discreet, considering a watchful and censorious world; but when one has such powerful and extremely loval friends, discretion is unnecessary."

"She paints beautifully, I understand," said Hayden indignantly.

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Penfield's thin laughter stabbed his ear-drums. "If she sold in a year all the pretty little pictures she paints it would barely pay for her gowns. No, that won't do. But," and a new note crept into Penfield's voice, "did you see that old duffer who was with her? That's where she shows her discretion. He is kept very much in the background. It is only very occasionally that she appears with him."

"Who is he?" asked Hayden gruffly, desperately ashamed of himself for

stooping to question Penfield.

Penfield elevated his evebrows and spread his hands, "Let us hope that he is the rich uncle from Australia," he said gently. "Ah, Hayden, Bea and Kitty have managed the affair with Wilfred Ames beautifully so far. have almost succeeded in pulling it off in spite of the reluctant lady and Wilfred's raving mother; but Wilfred, good, old, thick-witted Wilfred, is becoming daily more uncomfortable. Fido won't lie down and go to sleep on the hearth-rug as Kitty and Bea wish him On the contrary, owing to his mother's watchful vigilance, he is sniffing around quite suspiciously, and," with a series of chuckles, "I believe, although I am not sure yet, that the fair Marcia has a rival, and a rival to be reckoned with, I assure you."

Hayden felt that he had stood all that he could. Penfield really was too offensive. His first impulse was to turn on his heel and leave his companion without a word; but on second thoughts, he decided to retain Penfield's company, and put into execution a little plan which was rapidly maturing in his brain, and which appealed to his hazard-loving fancy. It was a mere chance, one in a million, but he considered it worth the taking. Penfield knew all the world and its affairs. He, more than any one Havden could think of, might be of use to him in a certain Argonautic expedition he was adventuring upon. He decided to put it to the

test, anyway,

"So you, too, are interested in mines," he said, with an easy change of subject. "Well," with a short laugh, "as far as they are concerned, I happen to be in the position of a man who sees a spring of water in the desert and may not stoop to drink of it."

"What on earth do you mean?" cried Horace. His head shot forward, his nose twitched. He scented a fresh piece of news as a dog scents truffles. "Have you found a fortune?" His curiosity was as fully aroused as Hayden hoped.

They had reached Robert's apartment

by this time and he paused a moment on the step. "Come in," he said, "and I will tell you. You have not seen

my diggings, anyway."

By what he considered a sheer stroke of luck, he, Hayden, had not been two days in New York, when an old friend, who was under the necessity of taking a long journey with the expectation of being absent several months, urged him to take possession of the apartment he and his wife were temporarily vacating. After a sight of it, Hayden gladly embraced the opportunity and now, he and his Japanese servant, Tatsu, the companion of ten wandering years, were installed in beautiful and luxurious quarters which had come without the lifting of a finger to secure them.

Here was a fresh field for Penfield's inevitable investigations, and Hayden's disclosures of his private affairs, deeply as they interested him, could wait a bit. Horace was patient by nature and training. "One thing at a time," was a favorite motto, and it was not until he had exhausted the possibilities of the apartment and had peered into every nook and corner, that he consented to sit down in the comfortable library and express his commendation of the place

and envy Hayden's luck.

Robert, on his part, had followed his guest about, replying mechanically to his questions and endeavoring to throw off a depression which had crept over

him.

The night had been cold, and to one with any decency of feeling, Penfield was a disagreeable companion; but if noxious he also had his uses, and the more Hayden pondered the matter, the more he was strengthened in his decision to secure Penfield's assistance. The humor for it grew upon him as the reassuring comfort and cheer of his surroundings gradually permeated his consciousness.

The wood-fire on the hearth flickered redly over the walls, the lamps were lighted in anticipation of his arrival; easy chairs were drawn near the fire; books, papers and magazines were temptingly displayed on the table.

"What were we talking about before

we came up," said Hayden, with the effect of mental effort.

"Mines," Horace replied promptly.
"You were about to tell me of a big
find you've made. Go on."

"Ah yes. But"—Hayden laughed a little ruefully—"you've put the thing entirely too definitely when you say 'a big find I've made.' The bother of it is that I have and I haven't."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Horace, cocking his head sidewise and looking at his host speculatively.

"Just what I say," replied the latter. "You see, it happened down in South America, several months ago. We were running a railroad through a great estate, oh, an enormous estate in the mountains. You could get about any variation of climate and soil you wanted. Well, there was a tradition about the place which I heard again and again, and which gradually grew to haunt my imagination; it was that somewhere on this estate was a lost mine of stupendous value; and that although no one had apparently any idea where it might be located, or had succeeded in finding a trace of it, nevertheless, according to current report, it had been worked within the last quarter of a century, that is, worked in a primitive and intermittent sort of a way."

"But," interrupted Penfield, "twentyfive years! That of course is within the memory of dozens of people. What

on earth-"

"Wait," said Hayden. "Your part of this game is to listen calmly, not interrupt. Don't you suppose I considered all those points? Now to go back into the history of the thing; this is the story that I gathered here a little, there a little, and gradually pieced together.

"This vast estate was one of the holdings of a very ancient and noble Spanish family. It was, as I have said, situated in the mountains, and naturally comprised great tracts of valueless land, barren and rocky, although there were also fertile valleys and broad cultivated plateaus. A great mansion, the home of Don Raimond De Leon, the owner

of the estate, was situated on one of these plateaus and commanded one of the most beautiful views one could dream of. One gazes down the mountainside on fields of corn and alfalfa, green as emerald, and orchards of blooming fruit-trees; down, down these terraces fall until at their feet lie the tropical valleys with their orange and pineapple groves, and wild, luxuriant vegetation; and then, one turns and glances upward; before him the barren mountainsides, the summits austere, remote, covered with perpetual snow.

"Well, here surrounded by every form of natural scenery, there lived, I say, this old don and his only daughter, Lolita. Of course she had a name a mile long, Maria Annunciata Mercedes Eugénie and all the rest, but they called her Lolita for convenience. The traditions of their rank were always rigidly maintained. They lived in feudal state and splendor, occasionally journeying to Spain; and the daughter, in addition to her beauty, was possessed of all the graces and accomplishments of a young woman of her class.

"But while yet in the flower of her beauty and youth, an American adventurer, a soldier of fortune, appeared upon the scene. He had either come by design or strayed there by mistake, probably the former; but that, however, is immaterial. He happened to possess those first requisites of the successful soldier of fortune-a charming personality, a pretty wit, and a most ready address. In a very short time, the hacienda and all that it contained were his. He captured not only the daughter but the old don himself, and to him the latter confided the source of the family's almost illimitable wealth, the source, but not its location; and this source was a hidden mine, called oddly enough 'The Veiled Mariposa.'

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Penfield started as if he had been shot, "What did you say that name was?" he cried, his ferret-face sharpened with eagerness.

"The Veiled Mariposa," repeated Hayden, watching him keenly, and overjoyed at the success of his plan. It was evident that Horace knew something. "Mariposa is the Spanish name for butterfly, you know."

"By Jove, what a coincidence!" muttered Penfield.

"A coincidence? How? What do you mean?" It was Robert's turn to be eager now. "Have you heard of it? Have you?"

Penfield shook his head. "Not of it exactly, but—but——"

"But—but——" repeated Hayden impatiently. He felt injured and showed it. "You evidently know something, but you won't tell me. Do you think that is playing quite fair, Horace?"

"Bosh! I'm playing fair all right, I'll tell you fast enough when there's anything to tell. What I have in mind may be the merest coincidence, probably is. I want to do a bit of thinking first before I say anything. But go on with your story. What has all this to do with you?"

"Where was I? Oh, yes." Hayden took up the thread of his narrative again. "Well, the soldier of fortune married the don's lovely daughter with the old father's entire approval. They had a great wedding, the festivities lasting for days. Don Raimond bestowed bags and bags of gold and silver on them, and they sailed away for France,

"Now, contrary to the customary fate of such unions, the marriage although childless turned out happily. For the next ten years or so, the American and his Spanish wife, his name by the way was Willoughby, lived in great magnificence in the various capitals of Europe, maintaining an almost royal state and entertaining constantly upon a grand scale. Occasionally, they visited the father in South America, and once or twice he visited them, and the bags of gold were always punctually forthcoming.

"Then suddenly, a most appalling thing happened. The district in which the old don lived was swept by a plague of unusual virulence. The De Leon succumbed before he had time to make any disposition of his property, even write a line to his daughter. His Yankee overseer in charge of the mine was

also stricken the same day and followed his employer within a few hours, and the Indian and Spanish laborers on the estate went like sheep. There is a rumor that misfortunes did not cease here, but that the plague was followed by an earthquake of a most devastating nature, and thus the population of that especial district was almost wiped out.

"As soon as the news of these disasters reached the Willoughbys they took passage at once for South America to verify the terrible rumors. They found their worst fears confirmed, and to crown their sorrows, Willoughby after going over De Leon's papers again and again could find no map of the mine, nor any directions as to its location. There were records enough of the ore mined and shipped, all in the old don's handwriting, but nothing to aid his son-in-law in rediscovering the mine.

"Willoughby immediately put some experienced prospectors to work and secured the services of several geological experts, but to no avail. The mine, mentioned always in the don's documents as 'The Veiled Mariposa,' seemed to have vanished as completely as if it had never existed, or to have been sunk by the earthquake into the very

bowels of the earth.

"All his efforts to find it having proved useless—efforts extending over several years—Willoughby put a young nephew of De Leon's, who had recently arrived from Spain, in temporary charge of the estate and returned with his wife to France. Accustomed now for many years to a vast, unconditioned expenditure, he found it impossible to contemplate the comparative poverty which stared him in the face and he resolved to try and dispose of the whole estate, which a will of De Leon's made at the time of her marriage conferred intact upon his daughter Lolita.

"He hoped to sell at a magnificent figure. He trusted to his own magnetic eloquence and his indisputable proofs of the enormous revenues of the mine to so inflame the cupidity of the purchaser or purchasers that he would find no difficulty in securing a sum which would enable him to live in comfort, even luxury, for the remainder of his days. He was not successful in arranging the matter abroad and he came to this country about six years ago hoping to make a better bargain. He remained here in New York several months and then sailed for France on *The Princess Verona*"

on The Princess Verona,"
"The Princess Verona," interrupted
Penfield. "Why, that was lost at sea;
went down with a terrible loss of life."

Hayden nodded. "And neither Willoughby nor his wife was among the saved. But just before sailing, he wrote to the Spanish nephew on the old estate, and also to his lawvers in France, announcing exultantly that he had been successful in his mission, having sold the property at a great figure, and that he would shortly write of all the details of the purchase. But from that day to this, the nephew has heard nothing further of the matter. There has been no effort to claim or to take possession of the property. That is, with this exception. Within the last six years, foreign prospectors have twice appeared on the estate, and on being questioned as to their business have said they came from the owners of the property. In both instances, however, they withheld the names of the people they were supposed to represent, and little credence was given to their story.

"But nevertheless, the French lawyers believe that the estate was sold, for just before sailing Willoughby purchased drafts in New York for a large

sum of money.

"But where are the owners? Why should any one person or group of persons consider a property sufficiently desirable as to pay such a sum for it and then apparently drop the whole matter? It's unthinkable, incredible.' Hayden sprang to his feet and began to walk the floor. "That's the question that has been puzzling me for months. What is their game? What does their waiting mean? But that is what I am here for-to try and trace up those owners. I'm prepared to give time and money to the task, for, Horace"-a passionate exultation rang through his voice—"I—I—have discovered the mine, the wonderful, lost, Veiled Marinesa"

"The deuce you have!" exclaimed Penfield, actually showing something like excitement. "And is it really all

that tradition says of it?"

"More," affirmed Robert solemnly. "I tell you, Horace, it makes the fabled treasures of the Incas look like thirty cents. Ah, it's—" He paused on the hearth-rug and looked down on the gossip in the chair. "I'm going to ask you, Penfield, not to mention any of this. I have told you the story because you know everybody and everything about everybody, and I hoped you might be able to help me in my investigations. Your exclamation a while ago shows that you do know something."

Penfield gazed at the fire through narrowed lids, then he shook his head. "No," he said, "truly I know nothing. What I jumped at a while ago is something that you are bound to run across yourself. I'm not telling all that I know, but I'm willing to bet that within a very short time you will hear of The Veiled Mariposa, and that, too, from

a most unexpected source."

"What are you driving at now?" cried Hayden. "Come, speak up, What's the use of being mysterious?"

"It amuses me, that's all," grinned Penfield. "But truly, Hayden, if I could be of any assistance to you I would. As I cannot, at present, I shall just sit tight and look on, occasionally putting my finger just far enough in the pie to stir things up and make them merry." He rose and getting into his coat and hat sauntered toward the door.

"But, Horace"—Hayden started after him—"what do you mean by predicting that I shall soon hear of The Veiled

Mariposa?"

But Penfield only grinned more inscrutably than ever and closed the door

behind him.

Hayden glared irritably after his departing guest and then shook his fist in the direction Penfield had taken. Having thus relieved his feelings, he threw himself into a chair and moodily lighted a cigarette. He was suffering

one of the swift reactions of the optimistic and mercurial temperament, which, if it suns itself upon the slope of Olympus pays for the privilege by an occasional sojourn in Avernus. He was disgusted with Penfield, with himself, with the world. What a fool he had been to tell Penfield, that archwhisperer of secrets, the story of his discovery and his hopes and dreams in

regard to it!

But wait, even in Avernus the darkness is sometimes penetrated by a ray of light. His quest, so far, had been fruitless. In the various cities of Europe where the Willoughbys had lived and where he had made the most patient investigations, he had discovered practically nothing; and yet, here in New York, he had seen Penfield, the imperturbable, literally jump when he had mentioned The Veiled Mariposa; and further, he had assured him that he would hear some word regarding it within a short time. Come! Hayden cheered visibly. That was something, at any rate. Things were not so bad, after all. He was well out of Avernus and beginning to scale Olympus, and his mind reverted to the earlier and happier part of the evening.

Then he had met and talked with Marcia Oldham. Marcia! What a charming name! It was certainly a tremendous piece of luck that he had discovered it. Of course, he had been disturbed by Penfield's revelations and innuendoes. No one who took an interest in Miss Oldham could fail to be so. Nevertheless, Penfield's statements should always be thoroughly discounted.

That was understood.

Robert mechanically lighted another cigarette, still deep in thought. Penfield had spoken of the Oldham family fortunes. "Nothing left," he had asserted, and yet they continued a manner of life which involved large expenditures. How could one account with some show of probability for these circumstances?

A number of hypotheses flashed through his brain. Could it not be possible that this strong, self-reliant girl might have been aware of certain resources of her father's; or could not some old friend greatly indebted to the father have come forward in the hour of need? That was not so incredible. Only, only, and this question recurred to him with an insistence, diabolical and mocking. Why should a woman young, beautiful, luxurious to the point of extravagance, preserve these mysteries?

Ave, there was the rub.

And as he sat there in the firelight, alone with his disturbing meditations, trying to find some solution of this haunting puzzle, he felt more strongly than ever the spell of her presence. He did not wish to throw it off, he could not have been able to do so if he willed. It seemed to him that he had but to lift his eyes to see her standing there in her black gown, the butterflies shining in the firelight. Again he looked into her sweet eyes, and he knew that from his soul he believed in her. That whatever circumstances entangled her they were not of her choosing, and that whatever mysteries enmeshed her the web was not of her weaving.

CHAPTER V.

Some business matters connected with his profession occupied the greater part of Hayden's time for the next day or so; but in his first moments of leisure, he hastened to look up Kitty

Hampton.

About five o'clock of a raw winter afternoon, he stopped at her house, intending under a pretense of a craving for hot tea to win Kitty to speech of her friend Marcia. Well-simulated shivers, a reference to the biting air, would secure his cousin's solicitude, then, at perhaps the third cup, he would in a spontaneous burst of confidence confess to a more than passing interest. This would at once gain Kitty's warm if unstable attention, her impulsive sympathy, and -- At this moment, the severe and forbidding butler informed him that Mrs. Hampton was not at home, was out of town, and all further inquiries were met by a polite and non-committal "I don't know, sir."

Hayden turned away both disap-

pointed and resentful. On the occasion of their walk, a few days before, Kitty had not mentioned to him any contemplated journey, and now, just as he was counting on enlisting her good offices, she had left him completely in the lurch, and all his plans for again meeting Marcia Oldham were, as he expressed it, up in the air.

To add to his general sense of disappointment and injury, he had had a brief line from Penfield saying that he had so far made no progress in some investigations he was making, but felt, nevertheless, that he was on the correct trail and hoped to turn up some-

thing within a short time.

Three or four days passed, the end of the week arrived, and still Kitty had not returned. Hayden felt like a man on a desert island who watches ships passing back and forth laden with merry pleasure-parties, too much absorbed in their own amusements or too indifferent to his sufferings to rescue him; and his sense of isolation and depression was greatly increased by the one, last, unnecessary bitter drop in his cup-for the lady of his dreams had wantonly mocked him. Her promises had been idle as the wind. She had assured him that she would be anything but difficult to discover, had given the impression that he might chance to meet her at any moment, but the hopes she had held out were cheats, and she had succeeded either wilfully or by force of circumstances in very successfully eluding him. She had vanished as completely as if she had been that shadowy astral wraith they had jestingly discussed, and he was not only baffled and perplexed but wounded.

His pride, very sore pride at present, was touched, and he told himself that since she chose thus to withdraw he would certainly not make a definite and overt attempt to follow. Then, by way of adhering strictly to this very good resolution, he proceeded to accept every social invitation which came his way, went religiously to luncheons, dinners, dances, anything that offered. He even invaded shops and strolled up and down Fifth Avenue; but New York was

empty of her. She had vanished as

suddenly as she had appeared.

One evening, just as he was really beginning to despair of ever seeing her again and feeling more dejected and miserable every minute in consequence, he stopped in at one of the theaters to see an act or two of a new play in which an English actress of great reputation, not only because of her beauty but also for the artistic quality of her acting, was appearing. To his own surprise, the first act interested him sufficiently to remain, a resolution that later he could not sufficiently commend, for, when the actress appeared in the second act, the street dress she had worn previously had been changed for a superb evening gown.

As she came forward to the footlights Hayden started as if he had received an electric shock and leaned eagerly forward fumbling for his glasses, for there upon her bosom, gleaming against the lace of her gown, was a great silver butterfly glittering with diamonds, while about her beautiful shoulders fell a familiar chain of tiny, enameled butterflies, azure, deep purple, yellow and orange, and strung

together with jewels.

Hayden sat through the rest of the play in a daze. To his excited fancy there were butterflies, butterflies everywhere, the air seemed full of them. They served to bring up the image of Marcia Oldham very vividly before him. He turned now and again and carefully scanned the house, half believing that she was present and he might at any minute encounter her eyes. But no such luck awaited him, and his surprise was all the more marked when just as he was leaving the theater after the play was finished he felt a light touch on his arm and looked down to see the laughing face of Kitty Hampton.

"Kitty!" Hayden clutched her with such a grip that she winced. "Where have you been? Although I have daily beaten on your doors and rung you up on the telephone, I couldn't find a trace of you."

She laughed. "Who says I haven't

well-trained servants! Come, drive home with me," stepping into her waiting electric brougham. "Warren will be there. He just got back this after-noon, and he will be so glad to have you. You see, I was becoming so bored and cross, and I got to hate the sight of everything and everybody to such an extent, that I just ran away from it all, down into the country; and the best part of it was, that I actually persuaded Marcia Oldham to go with me. Think of that! But I succeeded in convincing her that it was her duty to go with me, that I was really on the verge of an illness and needed her care. Marcia is strong on duty, you know. I tried my best to persuade her to do the play with me to-night, but she wouldn't. She said she had no end of things to look after.

"Oh, I am so glad I met you! It is sheer luck. You see there were some people to dinner, and afterward, there were enough for bridge without me, so I just slipped away without a word to anybody and hid myself in a box. And I do hope you're hungry, Bobby. I am dreadfully. Nothing makes me so hungry as a play. Well, we'll all have

some supper after a bit."

Hayden's heart sang. He had sought and sought and all his seeking had been vain, and here, by a mere chance, at an unlooked-for moment, the knowledge he had so ardently sought was his. He could afford to wait now; he leaned back comfortably and listened with an air of most eager interest to his cousin's chatter.

Kitty had quite recovered her spirits, and when they stopped before her door she was in the full tide of some gay reminiscences, and she continued her animated recital until they reached her

drawing-room.

There were a number of people present who seemed just to have left the bridge-tables and were still discussing the game. Warren Hampton, a tall, quiet, rather elderly man, welcomed Hayden cordially. They had always been good friends, and this was the first time they had met for several years. The rest, Hayden had either met casually or had to make the ac-

quaintance of. Among this latter group was Mrs. Habersham, mentioned by Penfield as one of Marcia Oldham's most loyal friends, and Hayden was tremendously interested in discovering in her the dark woman with the rosecolored gown and the cerise wings in her hair with whom Marcia had talked

that night at the opera.

Somewhat to his disappointment, he was not seated near her at the very jolly little supper which was served later, but was placed instead between Kitty and a sallow, angular, vivacious woman with an unbecoming blue fillet in her hair. He had been talking to Mrs. Habersham and Hampton, and had not really happened to glance at Kitty since they had entered the room, but after they were seated at the table, he turned to speak to her and was absolutely

struck dumb.

He drew his hand across his brow as if to brush away the cobwebs in his brain. What was this? From what sort of an obsession was he suffering? He had been thinking so much of those butterflies that he saw them wherever he looked; but poor victim of delusion that he was, he could swear that on Kitty's breast, gleaming against the laces of her gown, was the same silver butterfly which had earlier adorned the English actress, the same unique and beautiful chain of tiny, brilliant, enameled butterflies. He felt an imperative desire to put out his finger and touch them, to ask Kitty if she really wore them, or if he but dreamed them.

"Bobby," murmured his cousin so-licitously, "what on earth is the matter with you? You look as if you had just seen a ghost. Your eyes are popping out of your head, and you're staring at my butterflies as if they positively frightened you."

He drew a long breath of relief. "They're enough to make any one's eyes

pop out.'

She touched the huge silver insect on her breast. "Are they not dreams?" she said complacently. "One is simply nobody this winter unless one has them: and the beauty of it is they are so difficult to secure.'

"Miss Oldham wears a set," he announced boldly.

"Oh, of course." She shot him a quick, rather surprised glance. "Have you met Marcia vet?"

"Yes-just met her, not very long

"How odd that she didn't speak of it!" exclaimed Kitty. "But," enthusiastically, "isn't she a dear? Do you know. Bobby, I do not believe that there is any one in the world, with the possible exception of Warren, that I am half so fond of as I am of Marcia? She is everything, the most all-around person you can imagine, and so gifted. She did the loveliest little water-color for me while we were away. I will show it to you some time.'

At this moment, their conversation was interrupted by the lady with the blue fillet. She had not succeeded in getting even a hearing from the man on the other side of her. He showed a marked preference for his lobster in aspic, entirely ignoring the charms of her conversation and giving her very definitely to understand that he longed to be left to a silent contemplation and appreciation of the merits of the Hamp-

tons' chef.

"Oh, Kitty!" The blue fillet leaned across Hayden. "Bea Habersham was telling us that you had been to see this new fortune-teller. Is she really as good as Bea says?"

"Good! Indeed she is!" cried Kitty, plunging into this new subject with her usual enthusiasm. "She's the most remarkable thing you ever heard of, and the beauty of it is that you don't have to go into any dens and caves to find her-none of the black holes where you tremble for your life and begin to fear that you'll never get out again. And she has the most charming studio."

"Oh, Bea said it was the dreamiest thing you ever saw and that she herself was a vision. Do you suppose she gets herself up that way really to conceal her identity, or is it to arouse more

interest and enthusiasm?"

"How does she get herself up?" asked Hayden, with, however, no particular interest in his tones.

"Tell him, Kitty. I haven't been fortunate enough to see her yet," replied the blue fillet—Mrs. Edith Symmes, by

the way.

"Oh, it is too fascinating for anything." Kitty was eager to discuss her own particular find. "She is tall and graceful, oh, grace itself, and she wears a long black gown, Paris unmistakably, and"—Kitty threw great emphasis on this "and," and paused a moment for dramatic effect—"she wears a mantilla about her head, and a little black mask, with fringe falling from it so that even her mouth is concealed. It gives you the queerest creepy feeling when she comes into the room."

"How odd! How deliciously dreadful!" Mrs. Symmes shivered luxuriously. "Do write or telephone her and make an appointment for me, Kitty, dear. They say that if I do so on my own account I shall have to wait weeks and weeks, there are so many ahead of me; but you've been such an awfully efficient press-agent that she will do

anything for you."

"But her prices! Her dreadful prices!" sighed a plaintive feminine voice from the other side of the table. "Have you seen her, Mr. Hayden?"

"Indeed I have not," returned Hayden, "and I haven't the faintest intention of seeing her. I can't understand why you waste your money on those people. They have absolutely nothing to tell you, and they are fakers and worse, in every instance. You know it, each one of you, and yet you continue to patronize them."

"Hear him preach!" scoffed his

cousin.

"Kitty, you are the source of all our information this evening," broke in a woman on her left. "Do tell us if it is true that Marcia Oldham's engagement to Wilfred Ames is really announced?"

Hayden, his eyes on Kitty's face, could positively see it stiffen. "I really know nothing about it," she answered coldly.

"But they are together so much."

"There are always a lot of men about

Marcia." Kitty's tone was ominously curt.

"Oh, it is perfectly useless to try and get either Kitty or Bea Habersham to talk about Marcia," murmured Edith Symmes in Hayden's ear. "They simply will not do it, and it is sheer waste of breath to ask them any questions. Now, I happen to know that the engagement is not definitely announced." Hayden drew a long breath. It was as if some weight had been lifted from him, "Marcia is odd, you know, awfully odd; but just the same, in that slow, unyielding way of his, Wilfred is determined to marry her, and"-she lifted her eyes—"his mother is crazy, simply crazy about it. For a while she contented herself with merely clawing the air whenever Marcia's name was mentioned; but after her nice, quiet, stupid worm of a Wilfred turned and definitely announced to her his intentions, she hustled herself into her black bombazine and has literally made a house-to-house canvas, telling everywhere her tale of woe. Poor old dame, it is rather hard on her!"

"Why?" asked Hayden, ice in his voice. "I should think that she would consider her son an especially fortunate

man.

His companion gave a short laugh of irrepressible amusement. "I wish she could hear you say that, and might I be there to see the fun, from a safe corner, mind you! 'The shouting and the tunuit' would be worth while, I can assure you. Oh-h," with one of her affected little shivers, "I wish you could hear some of the things she says about Marcia! Of course, one cannot exactly blame the poor old soul, for to say the least, Marcia, dear as she is, certainly lays herself open to conjecture."

Hayden did not reply. He was rudely and unmistakably giving the impression of not having heard a word she said; but this attempt on his part, instead of offending his thin and voluble companion, only seemed to amuse her

inordinately.

"Do you know, Kitty," announced the plaintive-voiced lady across the table, "that your butterflies are really the prettiest ones I've seen, prettier than Mrs. ——," mentioning the English actress, "for I got a good look at them at a reception the other day, and yours are quite as lovely as Bea's. Dear me!" in almost weeping envy. "I wish I

could afford a chain of them."

Edith Symmes had a positive explosion of her noiseless, faintly malicious laughter. "Did you hear that?" she whispered to Hayden. "Whine-y Minnie over there is as rich as cream; and yet, she can't afford those dreamy butterflies, while Marcia Oldham, who hasn't a cent in the whole world, wears a set which, as usual, surpasses every other woman's. It is a most amazing and amusing social riddle. Even you, who are evidently one of her admirers, must admit that."

"I can't really afford anything worth while this year," sighed the dolorous lady characterized as whine-y Minnie, "but I must try and get an appointment with that fortune-teller, even if it is hideously expensive. What did you say

her name was, Kitty?"

"An odd name," mimicked Hayden, catching his cousin's eye and unable to resist a schoolboy temptation to tease her. "An odd name." He reproduced Kitty's high lisping tones perfectly.

"Bobby, if you mock me, I'll give you something that will make you laugh on the other side of your mouth," she said rapidly under her breath, and reverting to the phraseology of childhood. "Did you ask her name, Minnie? It is an odd name. Mademoiselle Mariposa. Sometimes called 'The Veiled Mariposa.'"

Hayden's laughing face stiffened as if he had received a shock from an electric battery. Mariposa! Mariposa!—the butterfly. Horace Penfield's words recurred to him: "I am willing to bet now that you will hear of The Veiled Mariposa in a very short time, and that, too, from a most unexpected source."

CHAPTER VI.

An afternoon or two later, having perfected a little plan in his mind, Hayden again called on his cousin to be informed that she was not at home. Kitty, he reflected, was never at home when any one wanted to find her. Therefore, with time on his hands, he turned into the Park and decided to stroll there for an hour or so. It was an almost incredibly mild afternoon for the season of the year, mild and soft and gray; the leafless boughs of the trees upheld the black irregular network of their twigs against the grav sky, with its faint, dull reflection of sunset gold, and the twilight brooded in the mists on the edge of distance as if it waited the hour to send its grav veils floating over the face of the earth.

Hayden walked slowly, and in this direction or that as his fancy dictated. It was not an afternoon for violent exercise; but for loitering and reverie. Presently, he looked up from his musings to see, to his infinite surprise and delight, Marcia Oldham approaching him down a twilight vista with the gold

behind her.

She, too, was influenced by the day and the hour, for she seemed to walk in a dream, and came quite near him without seeing him. She was all in black, and her furs, also black, were slipping from her shoulders, while her nuff dangled from a cord about her wrist. Hayden thought she looked a little tired and certainly pale; but that might have been due to the black hat and the lace veil she had thrown back from her face the better to enjoy the air.

She came quite close to him before she saw him, and as she lifted her eyes and met his she started slightly, a start of unmistakable amazement, and as it seemed to him, although perhaps this was but the reflection of his hopes, of

pleasure.

"I began to fear that we were never going to meet again," he said after they had exchanged the conventional greetings, and he had asked and had received permission to walk with her in whatever direction she might be taking.

"I have been away for a week," she answered, "and there have been a number of things to see to since my return. I have been very busy. You know I have a studio away from my home where I paint all day. Your cousin has bought a number of my pictures."

"She spoke of them. I am anxious to see them; and I knew you were away," he said. "I knew it psychologically. The town was full of people and yet, at the same time, it was very empty." That faint and lovely carnation on her cheek! "And Kitty Hampton told me that you had been away with her," he rather tamely concluded.

"Yes," she said, it seemed to him indifferently. Then with a change of tone, as if warning him from dangerous ground: "How absurd our acquaintance

has been!"

"Does it strike you so?" he asked sadly. "To me it is the most delightful, the most beautiful thing that ever hap-

pened."

"I should not be at all surprised," she said calmly, almost too calmly, and with premeditated irrelevance, "if Kitty and Bea were both of them awaiting me now." His boldness was incapable of ruffling her composure; but nevertheless, he saw with a secret joy the telltale and uncontrollable carnation

again fly to her cheek.

But Hayden had not even approached the limits of his courage. He had been too much baffled in his attempts to find her, she had proved too elusive for him to permit her lightly to slip through his fingers again, as it were, now, when he had the opportunity to press his claims for further recognition. Should a man who had succeeded more than once through bold but not displeasing words in causing the scarlet to stain that cheek of cream, carelessly forego any chance for future experiment?

"Surely, you won't leave me on your door-step this dreary afternoon," he pleaded: "I would never have suspected you of such hardness of heart. Why, it amounts almost to—to—brutality," casting about him for a good strong word. "You will pass on into light and warmth and comfort; tea, the cheering cup, and cakes, no doubt cakes, while I am left out in this gray depressing atmosphere, night coming on, the rain

falling-"

"Rain! Oh, nonsense. You have overshot your mark." She lifted her face to the sky. "Not a drop," scorn-

fully.

He stripped his glove from his hand and held out the bare palm. "I thought so." with calm triumph. "A steady drizzle. You don't feel it yet because of your hat; but you will presently. It will very shortly turn to a drenching shower; that especial sort of cloud yonder," waving his stick toward the west, "always indicates a drenching shower, Oh," in answer to her incredulous smile, "you can't tell me anything about weather conditions, I've lived too much in the open not to be thoroughly conversant of them. So you see I know what I'm talking about when I say that a woman who would leave a man on a door-step on an afternoon like this is the kind that would shut up the house and go away for the summer leaving the cat to forage for itself."

"But think of your nice warm apartment, and the subways, and street-cars and taxicabs and hansoms which will

swiftly bear you thither."

His glance was a reproachful protest. "Every form of conveyance you have mentioned is drafty. Coming from the hot climates I have lived in so long—" He paused and coughed tentatively. "But what is the use of all this thrust and parry?" pressing his advantage. "Are you or are you not going to give me a cup of tea?"

At this very direct question, the laughter, the gaiety vanished from her face. She looked thoughtful and seemed to consider so trivial a matter quite unnecessarily. Then, apparently arriving at a sudden decision, she said with a sort of sweet, prim courtesy: "I should be very glad to have you come in with me and meet my mother. I think it is very probable that we will find Kitty, and perhaps Bea, there before us."

"Thank you very much," he said, with equal formality. "I very much appreciate your letting me come."

The remainder of their walk he found delightful. Marcia was pleased to throw off, in a measure, the reserve, the absorption which seemed almost habitual with her, and she chatted with him frankly, occasionally even playfully, as

they strolled along.

"Why," he asked her curiously, "did you put that hypothetical question to me that evening at the Gildersleeve, about the young woman living in the country and sending her astral body on little visits to town?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," she laughed. "It often amuses me to indulge in little fanciful flights like that."

"I think you were purposely trying to mystify me," he said. "You saw that I was going to be a bore and you pretended to be a ghost, trusting to your noiseless and mysterious manner of appearing and disappearing to work on my fears and frighten me off. And, truth to tell, there is something uncanny about your peculiarly soundless

and rustleless movements.'

"Oh, absurd!" she cried, the very tips of her ears red. Hayden might well exult in his ability to make her "How you do romance! The whole situation was an absolutely simple one. Old Mr .-- " He fancied she caught her breath sharply, but if it were so she recovered herself immediately and went on: "The man with whom I was dining-I had to see him that evening. He was leaving town. I was leaving him at the station when I bowed to you and Mr. Penfield from the motor, and, as I was saying, I had to see him before he left on a-a business matter, and naturally, it was much easier to talk it over with him at the Gildersleeve than any place else."

She smiled as she finished, and Hayden saw more in that smile than she intended or desired he should. It was in itself a full period, definitely closing the subject. It also held resentment, annoyance with herself that she had permitted herself to fall into so egregious a blunder as an explanation.

"Oh, how I love a winter evening like this!" she went on hurriedly. "Once in a while, they stray into the heart of winter from the sun-warmed autumn, and they get so cold, poor little strays from Indian Summer, that they wrap themselves in all the clouds

and mists they can find. Ah, isn't it soft and dim and sweet and mysterious? The wind sings such an eerie little song, and the tiny, pale crescent moon is just rising. Look, it has a ring about it! It will rain to-morrow. Oh, dear!"

They had left the Park a few minutes before and turned in the direction of Riverside Drive, and a few steps brought them to the home in which Marcia's father had installed his family a few months before the crash came and his subsequent death. It was a handsome house, within as well as without; dark, stately, and sumptuous in effect. The sound of voices and laughter reached their ears as they ascended the stairs, and when they entered the drawing-room they found a number of

people there before them.

There was Kitty looking more than ever like a charming, if not very good little boy, and dressed beautifully, if incongruously, in a trailing limp gown of champagne color and wistaria most wonderfully blended, when her face, her figure, the way she wore her hair, seemed to cry aloud for knickerbockers; and there was Bea Habersham in velvet, of the cerise shade she so much affected, and Edith Symmes suggesting nothing so much as a distinguished but malevolent fairy, her keen, satirical, sallow face looking almost livid in contrast with a terrible gown which she spoke of with pride, as "this sweet, gaslight green frock of mine.'

"Mother, Mr. Hayden has come in with me for a cup of tea. He doesn't know yet that you make the very best tea in all the world." Marcia's voice, in speaking to her mother, seemed to take on an added gentleness. It struck Hayden that so she might speak to a

small child.

Mrs. Oldham greeted Hayden most graciously, but he could not fail to notice that she turned to her daughter with an indefinable displeasure in both glance and manner. She was a small woman, barely as high as Marcia's shoulder; a surprise always, when noted, for the carriage of her head and shoulders gave the impression of her being above medium height; she had

evidently been an extremely pretty creature of the Dresden China type, and she still bore the manner and assurance of beauty, fortifying this mental attitude by a genius for dress. Thus she succeeded in maintaining an illusion perfectly satisfactory to herself, if not quite so much so to others, for it was rather a hungry beast of an illusion and demanded constant oblations and sacrifice.

Her hair, like Marcia's, was dark with the same loose and heavy waves, and her features exhibited the same delicate regularity; but the strength and sweetness of character so marked in the daughter's face were lacking in the Two rather striking blemishes on the older woman's beauty, a wandering eve and a scar on the soft cheek, she took her own peculiar method of ignoring, thus completely and effectively discounting any unfavorable opinion in the mind of the beholder. Consequently, she frequently referred to them, never as blemishes, but as slight but significant evidences of a distinctive and distinguished individuality.

"Oh, Marcia! What a dream of a hat!" cried Kitty. "And new. It's a Virot"

Marcia laughed her gentle and charming laugh. "Yes, it's new and I'm so glad you like it."

"New, new, new," said her mother petulantly. "It's something new every day. I never saw such a spendthrift. It's a good thing my wants are so few."

Marcia did not appear to hear this, and almost immediately her attention was taken up by the entrance of Wilfred Ames, big, stolid and good-looking, while hard upon his heels followed Horace Penfield.

Mrs. Oldham, seeing that Penfield had gravitated toward the three women, Edith Symmes, Kitty and Bea, and that Ames had drawn Marcia a little apart, urged Hayden to come and sit beside her tea-table and let her brew him a cup of fresh tea.

"It's really a rest for me, Mr. Hayden," she said pathetically, "for truly, it is very little rest I get. This big house to look after—Marcia is not the least assistance to me in housekeeping—and a daughter on one's mind." She sighed heavily. "It is enough to make Mr. Oldham turn over in his grave if he could see all the care and responsibility that is thrown on my shoulders. He couldn't endure the thought of such a thing. He always said to me: 'Those little feet were made to tread on flowers.' He was so absurd about my feet, you know. Not that they are anything remarkable; but I'm from the South, Mr. Hayden, and it's only natural that I should have beautiful feet.

"But then, as I often told him, he was just so constituted that he could see nothing in me but absolute perfection. Why, do you know, one of my eyes has a slight, oh, a very slight defect, you have probably not noticed it. Well, we had been married for vears before he ever saw it. I happened to mention it and he simply would not believe me until I convinced him by standing before him in a very strong light with my eyes wide open. Do let me give you a little more tea. No? Then some sugar or lemon, just to freshen up a bit what you have. How handsome Marcia and Wilfred look standing together, she is so dark and he is so fair. He is a dear fellow and so steady and sedate. I love him like a son, and I consider his influence over Marcia excellent.

"She is, of course, the dearest thing in the world to me. Mr. Hayden. You will understand that, but I feel a mother's solicitude, and she has certain traits which I fear may become exaggerated faults. She is inclined to be headstrong, heedless, wilful, and I'm afraid, sweet as Mrs. Hampton and Mrs. Habersham are-dear girls! I love them like my own daughters-that they encourage Marcia in her defiance of proper authority and her dreadful extravagance. But," sighing, "she is young and pretty and she does not think; although Mr. Oldham used often to say: 'Marcia will never have her What do you think mother's beauty.' of such an absurdity?"

"I think if Diogenes had met Mr.

Oldham he would have blown out his light and gone back to the seclusion of his bath-tub for the rest of his life."

"Oh!" Mrs. Oldham looked puzzled.
"Oh, Diogenes! Oh, yes, searching for an honest man. Mr. Hayden, what a charming thing of you to say! I must remember that, and so witty, too! Edith dear," as Mrs. Symmes approached them, "you can't fancy what a wit Mr. Hayden is."

"Oh, yes, I can," returned Mrs. Symmes, "and that is the reason I have come to drag him away from you. Here is Mr. Penfield to take his place, and tell you a lot of new scandals all springing directly from the seven deadly old sins. Come and sit on the sofa with

me, Mr. Hayden."

"Rescued!" he muttered feebly when they had sat down in a remote corner. "I had an idea that I was never going to escape, that it would run on forever

and ever."

"Poor Marcia!" murmured Mrs. Symmes, glancing toward the window where Marcia and Ames stood, still engrossed in conversation. "And poor Wilfred! You haven't seen his Old Man of the Sea yet—meaning his mother?"

"No, is she, too, a Venus with a bad

eye?"

"Quite the reverse." Faint sparkles of amusement came into her eyes, amusement which was always touched with a slight malice. "Mr. Hayden, some people are coming to take luncheon with me next Wednesday, I may count on you, may I not?"

"Indeed, ves," he assured her. ".

should like nothing better."

She rose and he with her. Every one was doing the same. With a purpose which had been maturing in his mind during the last hour, Hayden approached Kitty and Marcia, who stood together talking in low tones as Kitty caught her furs about her.

"Miss Oldham," Hayden's voice was delightfully ingratiating, "don't you or Kitty want to give me the address of this wonderful fortune-teller, Madem-

oiselle Mariposa?"

"But you said you took no interest in

such things," Kitty spoke quickly. "You insisted that they were all fakers and frauds. Why do you want to go now?"

"But I have an idea that I have met

the lady," he asserted.

Marcia gave a quick start; but Kitty laughed. "I defy you to pierce her disguise," she asserted, "and tell whether you have met her or not, unless, of course, she acknowledges the acquaintance. I will telephone you her address the moment I reach home. I do not remember the number."

CHAPTER VII.

Kitty was as good as her word and telephoned her cousin the address of Mademoiselle Mariposa that evening. A fact that rather surprised Hayden, as he had a sort of indefinable idea that she would conveniently forget her

promise.

On his part, he lost no time in seeking the Mariposa, calling at her apartment the next morning, only to be informed by a particularly trim and discreet maid that her mistress received no one save by appointment. Therefore, bowing to the inevitable with what philosophy he could summon, he went home and wrote a note to the seeress, requesting an early interview and signing an assumed name. He was gratified to receive an answer, dictated, the next morning in which Mademoiselle Mariposa stated that she would be pleased to receive him at three o'clock in the afternoon, on the following Thursday, and this was Tuesday. Two days farther away than he desired, but there was nothing to do but curb his impatience, and he set about occupying his mind and incidentally his time until Thursday.

Fortunately, he discovered in glancing over his list of engagements that a number of events dovetailed together admirably, thus filling up the hours, and among them was Edith Symmes' luncheon on Wednesday. He heaved a sigh of relief that there were enough things on hand to give time wings, even if artificial ones, when it seemed bent

on perversely dragging leaden feet along the ground. In consequence he betook himself to Mrs. Symmes' house on Wednesday with more eagerness than he would otherwise have shown had he not regarded her luncheon as a time-chaser.

Mrs. Symmes had been early widowed. Her experience of married life included a bare two years, her husband living a twelve-month longer than the friends of both had predicted. He was, so rumor had it, a charming fellow of rare artistic taste and discrimination, a dilettante, and a connoisseur of all things beautiful. So sensitively was he organized that inharmonies or discords of color, or any lack of artistic perception affected him acutely, often to the verge of illness, and always to irritation. Although he permitted his wife no voice in the decoration and furnishing of either town or country house, almost desperately withheld it from her in fact, he could not control or even influence her taste in dress, and there were those who did not hesitate to whisper that Edith's costumes alone were quite sufficient to have caused his death.

After that event, Mrs. Symmes endured the low-toned harmonies of her husband's faultless taste for six months, and then declaring her environment depressing to her spirits, she refurnished the house from garret to cellar, perpetrating crimes in decoration which made the horrors of her toilets seem

mere peccadillos.

Hayden was soon to realize this, for on arriving at her home on Wednesday he was shown to a drawing-room large in size but crowded with furniture. Little tables, chairs, footstools, anything which would serve as a stumblingblock, seemed to be placed in the direct path of the guest advancing toward his hostess.

Robert, seeing that it behooved him to walk as delicately as Agag, reached Mrs. Symmes without misadventure, and after exchanging the usual lightweight coin of conventional greeting, looked about him for a familiar face. Most of the people he knew only casually; but presently, he spied Mrs. Habersham and made his way toward her as rapidly as the manifold objects in

his path permitted.

She was, as usual, in one of the shades of American Beauty, which she so much affected, and which were admirably suited to her, giving depth and opulence, the rich restfulness of color to her too sharply defined and restless beauty. Upon her breast was her silver butterfly and the enameled chains were about her throat.

"I have walked twice across this room," said Hayden triumphantly, after shaking hands with her, "and I haven't fallen once. If I came here often I should bring an ax, notch the furniture and then clear a path. There goes some one!" as a heavy stumble was heard. "I did better than that."

"Don't boast. Remember that it is the wicked who stand in slippery places," said Bea, with meaning. "But is some distorted, goggle-eyed Chinese monster at my elbow, and on the table before me is an ornament which chills the marrow of my bones. I dare not look up."

Hayden gazed bravely about him. "I don't think I ever saw such a hideous room in my life," he said slowly and

with conviction.

"There is only one room in the world uglier," Bea assured him, "and that is the dining-room; but they do say that the wall-paper in her bedroom is of a bright scarlet, with large lozenges representing green and blue parrots swinging in gilded cages."

Hayden laughed and shivered. "It takes strong nerves," he said. "Do you suppose there are people who come

often?"

"Oh, dear me, yes," returned Mrs. Habersham. "One would dine in Inferno if the food were good. Her table is as perfect as her house and gowns are dreadful, and then Edith herself is very clever and amusing. Here she comes.

"The cause of this delay," smiled Mrs. Symmes in passing, "is Mrs. Ames. I'll give her just one minute

more."

Bea smiled perfunctorily, and then turned on Hayden an alarmed face. "I never would have come to-day—never, if I had fancied she would be present. She will be sure to launch out on Marcia Oldham before luncheon is over. She never misses an opportunity. She has a mania on the subject."

Hayden glanced toward the door with curiosity. "Where is this pepper and vitriol old dame?" he asked, with

elaborate carelessness.

"She has not come yet. Did you not hear Edith say that it is she for whom we are waiting? You will see her in a moment, though. She is always late; but she will come, never fear."

Her words were prophetic, for at that moment Mrs. Ames hurried into the room, a wiry, spare old woman with a small hooked nose and a jaw like a nut-cracker. The skin of her face was yellow and deeply wrinkled, her eyes were those of a fierce, untamed bird, and she was gowned—swathed is the more suitable word—in rusty black with a quantity of dangling fringes and many jingling chains.

Luncheon was announced immediately after her arrival, and to Hayden's dismay he found that it was served at small tables and that he was placed between Mrs. Ames and Mrs. Habersham, with Horace Penfield opposite smiling in faint satirical glee at the situation.

"I shall never forgive Edith Symmes for this, never," was Bea's indignant whisper in Hayden's ear. "But just the same, I shall not give that old witch a chance to air any of her grievances. You see. With your help and cooperation I intend to monopolize the conversation."

Robert hastily assured her that she could depend on him to the limit of his capacities, and together they seized and held the ball of conversation, occasionally tossing it from one to the other; but never permitting it for a moment to fall into either Penfield's or Mrs. Ames' hands.

Hayden pottered over this incident or that, dawdling through long-winded tales of travel, and when his recollections or inventions flagged Mrs. Habersham introduced topics so inimical to Mrs. Ames' frequently aired views that this lady rose passionately to the fray. Woman's Suffrage, Socialism, the Decline of the Church, Bea, a conservative, flung upon the table and Mrs. Ames pounced upon them as a dog upon a bone, a radical of radicals.

Meantime, Horace Penfield had sat enjoying his luncheon with a cool placidity, and listening with a smile of faint amusement to the arguments which surged and eddied about him. He looked for the most part indifferent, although, perhaps, he was only patient.

At last, in an unguarded moment Mrs. Habersham paused for breath, and in the brief ensuing silence Penfield entered the conversation like a thin,

sharp wedge.

"What a fad those butterflies are among you lovely ladies," he said to Mrs. Habersham. "But yours are paler than most of them, more opaline. Why?"

"Because I wear red so frequently," she replied indifferently. "The purple and yellow butterflies would look horrid with my crimson frocks."

"I really think," said Penfield slowly, meeting her eyes with a cool, blank gaze, "that, saving your presence, Mrs. Habersham, Marcia Oldham has by far the handsomest set I have seen."

At this red rag, purposely fluttered as Hayden felt before the eyes of Mrs. Ames, that lady sniffed audibly and tossed her head, emitting at the same moment a faint, contemptuous cackle.

"Oh, no," Bea assured him with languor although the scarlet burned in her cheek. "Marcia's are nothing to compare to Mrs. ——," mentioning the name of the London actress.

"Oh, I must differ from you." Penfield was suavely positive. "I am surprised that you should say that, for Miss Oldham's are quite the most artistic I have seen."

"Naturally Miss Oldham would have the handsomest set in the market, wouldn't she?" queried Mrs. Ames in what no doubt was intended to be a tone of innocent inquiry. "Marcia's taste is very beautiful,"

said Mrs. Habersham coldly.

"And very extravagant, I understand." Mrs. Ames was started now; there was no stopping her. "If one wears beautiful things in these days one must expect to pay for them.'

Mrs. Habersham shrugged her shoulders and turning to Hayden asked him when he had last seen his cousin Kitty Hampton; but Mrs. Ames' cracked voice rose above their low tones.

"I wish some one would explain to me-perhaps you can, Mr. Penfieldjust how a young woman who hasn't a penny to her name can afford a superb necklace? Such things could not have occurred in my young days; but different times, different manners. Humph!"

Before Penfield could reply. Bea Habersham leaned across the table and addressed her clearly: "It seems to me that such imaginary and absurd behavior would be considered as reprehensible to-day as in the remote era you

mention.

Mrs. Ames held her lorgnon to her eyes with one withered, yellow hand, each finger covered to the swollen knuckles with diamonds dim with dust, then she dropped it in her lap with another dry cackle and said with a complete change of tone, as if reverting to some new topic of conversation:

"Mr. Penfield was speaking of your friend, Miss Oldham, a moment or two ago, Mrs. Habersham. Perhaps you will be able to tell me the identity of the rather elderly, ordinary-looking man with whom I have seen her several

times lately?"

It seemed to Havden that Bea's face grew a shade paler, but his momentary apprehension gave way to a swift admiration for her poise, the casual and careless indifference with which she an-

swered:

"I am sure I can't imagine, Mrs. Ames. Marcia has many friends, more I fancy than you dream of." He also felt a swift longing to take Horace Penfield by the scruff of his thin, craning neck and drop him from the window instead of permitting him to sit there calmly sipping his liqueur with that faint, amused smile as of gratified malice about his lips.

Then he drew a breath of relief.

Every one was rising. "You were magnificent," he whispered as he drew aside for Bea to pass.

She smiled gratefully at him. "Thank goodness, it's to be bridge now and not

conversation.

A few minutes later they were all seated at the card-tables and except for the occasional low-toned voicing of the conventions of the game, a grateful si-

lence reigned.

But at the close of the afternoon, just as they were leaving, Bea asked Havden if he would not drive downtown with her and let her drop him at his apartment. He accepted gladly, hoping in the brief intimacy of the drive homeward together that she would speak of Marcia.

But for a season, Mrs. Habersham cared only to discuss the scene they had just left; the fortunes of the game; the excellencies of this player, the atrocities of that; the eccentricities of their hostess and her apparently ineradicable passion for ugliness.

"It is true," she assured him, "about the red paper and the green and blue parrots in gilt cages; a woman who has

seen it swore upon her honor.'

They had by this time turned into the Park, and Bea leaned forward to inhale the fresher air. Night was falling fast; the spreading lawn-spaces, the dense shrubbery, the irregularly disposed trees were no longer distinct, but melted together, indistinguishable and unfeatured blurs in the deepening twilight.

Bea drooped her brow on her hand and sat in silence for a few moments. Then she turned to Hayden, her lips compressed, her hands clasped tightly

together.

"Isn't it awful! Isn't it dreadful!" she cried. "To think of that old witch of Endor saying all those horrible untrue things about poor lovely Marcia. and worse, spreading them broadcast?"

Hayden lifted his chin in quick determination. "Mrs. Habersham, I cannot be ignorant of what you refer to.

I have, to my annoyance"—he hesitated and then deliberately chose another word—"to my pain, heard various hints and innuendoes before of the same kind. Now, why is this? Just malice, envy, jealousy? Why"—his indignation vibrated through his voice—"should one so lovely, so above reproach, as Miss Oldham, be the victim of that sort of

thing?"

"Because," said Bea bitterly, "Marcia attends strictly to her own business and does not request any advice or permit any interference. Oh, Mr. Hayden, it is useless to tell you what a dear she is. I know from what you have just said that you do, you must admire her. No one could help it," she added, with a simple and loyal conviction. "So you may understand how difficult it is for us who love her, for the very few of us who are in some measure in her confidence, to have to accept the fact that there are certain things in her life which appear odd, which are not--" She broke off, looking at him uncertainly.

"Mrs. Habersham——" Hayden had turned about in his seat so that he could gaze more directly at her, and now, although his face had grown pale, he smiled down upon her his charming smile. "Mrs. Habersham, let me go further and tell you that I have never met a woman in my life to whom I have felt as I do to Miss Oldham. Why not put it frankly and tell you the ex-

act truth? I love her."

Bea's eyes brightened delightedly and then grew a little sad. "I suspected as much," she said gently, "and yet, I hardly knew whether you had the courage or not. Now," impulsively moving nearer to him, "I will be as frank as you have been. Nothing in all the world, nothing would please me half as much as for you and Marcia to love each other. I don't know you awfully well, Mr. Hayden, and yet," she laughed, "I do in a way. True, we have only met a few times; but for many years I have been well acquainted with Kitty's 'Bobby.' But," and her dark eyes smiled on him with soft shining in their depths, "I think that just now

when there is all this unkind whispering it is a beautiful and courageous thing for you to love Marcia, and I want to assure you that all the support I can give you to your cause is yours."

Her ungloved hand lay on her knee, and Hayden lifted it and lightly kissed it. "Dear lady," he began, his voice a

little broken.

"Oh, wait!" She lifted the same hand in admonition. "My support may not amount to anything. Reserve your gratitude. Marcia is extremely reticent about her own affairs, but, nevertheless, I can give you a crumb of comfort. No matter what every one says, I am sure that she and Wilfred Ames are not engaged and that she does not begin to see as much of him as people think; and I do know"-again her voice was shaken with indignation-"that there wouldn't begin to be as much of this unpleasant talk if it were not for his mother's wicked, frantic fears. Why, what does she wish? She might be glad, proud to have such a daughter-inlaw as Marcia. Oh, Mr. Hayden, I can't talk about it. It makes me too angry."

"Mrs. Habersham"—Hayden spoke with that quiet, forceful determination which was the keynote of his character—"I desire nothing so much in the world as to be of assistance to Miss Oldham. Can't we"—his smile had never been more winning—"can't we clear away these cobwebs of mystery

which surround her?"

"Ah," cried Bea Habersham, tears in her eyes, "we, who love her all long to do that."

"Then you will help me?"

"Oh, you give me hope that it is a possibility," with one of her radiant changes of mood. "But," and she fell again into depression, "I cannot help you. You must do it all, all yourself."

CHAPTER VIII.

Even to the impatient heart of youth the longed-for, entreated to-morrow comes with a suddenness which has its elements of shock. The Thursday which Hayden had regarded as so remote was actually here, and he, opening his eyes to the fact after a sound night's rest, was aware of that faint shrinking which comes to us all in that moment of embarkation upon the unknown and uncharted.

This day, he felt, was to be a day of revelations; in an hour, a moment, he might, nay he was sure that he would, learn certain facts, touch certain clues which might change and direct his whole future existence. As he dressed he caused the various circumstances of the past few weeks to marshal themselves in orderly array and pass in re-

view before him.

He, by some irony of chance, had been so fortunate as to discover the wonderful lost Mariposa, The Veiled Mariposa; but although a vast fortune lay before his eyes, within his grasp, he was withheld from profiting by this strange stumble upon Golconda by the intangible potent arm of the law. And all his diligent efforts to find the owners of the property had been in vain. Then he had come to New York, largely to enjoy a long-anticipated vacation, and before he had had time to make definite plans and decide upon the best methods of prosecuting his search for the owners of the mine, he heard, by the merest chance, of a fortune-teller who called herself Mariposa and who always appeared veiled. This fanciful symbolism might of course be the merest coincidence; but Havden could not so view it. It was too significant not to smack of design.

And then, by another curious turn of the wheel, he had met a strange and lovely lady with a chain of jeweled butterflies about her throat, a great silver butterfly upon her breast. What significance could be attached to them? Apparently none. They seemed the fad of several great ladies and a very beautiful and extravagant fad; but what was the inner meaning, if indeed there were any? Yet, look at the matter dispassionately as he would, he could not rid himself of the idea that these delicately fashioned, fluttering things had a significance. Well, perhaps the day would disclose it. There was no use in

his attempting to arrive at a solution of these enigmas. He could but await

the pleasure of destiny.

Then his thoughts reverted to his conversation with Mrs. Habersham, and his heart rose buoyantly with hope. She had, at least, assured him of one thing, and that was that there was nothing definite in these reports of Marcia's engagement to Wilfred Ames; and there were secret intimations prompted not of his vanity, but of a belief in the sympathetic understanding existing between Marcia and himself, which confirmed him in his determination to make

the most of a fighting chance. He managed, with these reflections, his correspondence and the various details of some business matters, to pass the morning; but when at three o'clock he made his way to the Mariposa's apartment he found himself to his own disgust in an unwonted state of excitement, which, as usual with him, revealed itself only in a more calm and leisurely demeanor; but when on stepping from the elevator he realized that his hands were like ice, he was for the moment irritated at his lack of nerve. and then he quickly bolstered himself up with the reflection that the day of destiny comes only once in a lifetime and one would have arrived at a state of vegetable stolidity to meet it unmoved. Then he laughed at himself for clinging so obstinately to the belief that this was the day of his destiny, and this laughter cleared his mental atmosphere. He was himself again in command of his self-assurance and good spirits.

His ring was answered immediately by the trim maid who conducted him through a narrow hall and into a small reception-room where she requested him to wait while she informed her mistress

of his presence.

Left alone he glanced curiously about him. There was certainly no mystery here. The room was agreeably light and sunshiny. It was furnished with several comfortable chairs, and a large round table in the center of the room. Upon this were scattered some of the latest magazines surrounding a vase of fresh and fragrant flowers.

Hayden turned over the pages of one of the books for a moment and then the dark-eyed, rosy, white-capped maid reappeared and announced that Mademoiselle Mariposa would see him at once.

A few paces down the narrow hall, she drew aside the curtain before the door of mademoiselle's consulting-room, and stood aside for Hayden to enter, letting the portière fall noiselessly behind him. But Robert instead of advancing and taking a chair, although there was none to invite him to do so, for the room was empty, stood transfixed upon the threshold, almost openmouthed.

Ah, here was the atmosphere he had so sadly missed in the small parlor. This room was large, and it seemed to one entering it for the first time to extend indefinitely, for upon the walls, against a soft, low-toned background, were painted the bare trunks and branches of leafless trees, a forest of them apparently, so admirable and so illusive was the perspective. The eye seemed to plunge into interminable forest vistas of dead leaves covering the ground and even floating on dim, moveless pools. The rounded ceiling was painted with silver-edged clouds, and the only light fell from a skylight like a great vellow moon.

When Hayden finally drew his attention from the walls and ceiling sufficiently to realize that he was not in the autumn woods, he noticed that this apartment was scantily furnished. Two or three chairs, a small table or so. Upon one of these tables was a bronze tripod upholding a crystal ball and a silk cushion upon which to rest one's hand during a palm-reading. Upon another table were several astrological charts and small books, presumably

works of reference.

As he still stood motionless there was a slight rustle at the door, the curtain parted and the Mariposa entered clad as always in her graceful black gown, the mantilla and the mask. It was the most effective of disguises and yet, it was negatived, nullified by a positive force of personality so unmistakable and definite that the disguise instead of con-

cealing served more subtly to reveal and even accentuate individuality.

"How do you do, Mr. Hayden," speaking with a marked Spanish accent and seating herself at the table holding the crystal globe. He started visibly, to his own disgust, for she had quite ignored the name he had signed

to his note.

But with every moment that passed he was becoming more at ease and experiencing a delightful sense of reassurance. For days he had been putting from, him the latent but constant fear that Marcia Oldham and Mademoiselle Mariposa were identical; but a personal atmosphere is unmistakable, and in spite of her excellent and efficient disguise, Hayden felt instinctively that this was no delicate and wistful violet, but a gorgeous tropical bloom swaying from the tallest trees and exulting in torrid sunshine and fierce tempest. Her voice, too, was deeper and fuller, and the accent was, beyond question, genuine.

"Do you prefer a palm-reading, the crystal-gazing or both?" she asked, and although the words were the usual commonplace phrases that she probably repeated a dozen times a day, uttered monotonously enough, yet through some vibrant, ringing quality her most ordinary utterances were endued with

life

"I hardly know," he said in answer to her question. "What would you ad-

vise?"

. "Why not try the crystal?" she said. "You will, I am sure, find it more interesting." Without waiting for his answer, she lifted the crystal ball from its tripod to the silken cushion, and began intently to gaze into its depths.

And now Hayden drew a sigh of intense relief. There was no longer any ground for the shadow of a doubt, for the hands of Mademoiselle Mariposa were not the hands of Marcia Oldham. Marcia's hands, as he had particularly noticed, were small and white, with very pink palms, and long, pointed, rosytipped fingers; while this woman's hands were smooth and creamy, the color of old ivory, with square fingers.

For a few moments there was silence

between them, and then the fortuneteller began to speak in low contralto tones, tones so near the brink of music • that one expected trills and ripples of

melody.

"I see mountains, yes, mountains, great bare hills; they change and vary in appearance, but there are always mountains; and I see wide burning deserts stretching on and on, and now there are forests, dark, impenetrable, vast forests. You have traveled much in foreign lands, señor. Now bridges and railroads, oh quite clearly, and natives-Chinese, blacks, Indians-much work in building railroads in many lands. Ah, clouds, clouds, clouds! Now they clear a little. Oh, señor, it is mountains again, ranges of them. They become more clear, always more clear, and now your figure. I see you very You are in the mountains. plainly. You follow a little trail. It winds curiously among the rocks, twisting, turning, occasionally descending, often doubling on itself. Clouds again, clouds! Ah, now I see you again and in the broad sunshine. You are greatly excited. Your face is white, your eyes are shining-and your hands are full of nuggets, golden nuggets, free gold, señor; it shines and gleams like fire in the sun. Wonderful! I have rarely had so clear a vision!'

Hayden deliberately leaned forward and lifted the crystal from the silken cushion to its tripod. "I thought so," he said. "There, mademoiselle, I believe we can talk better with that out of the way. What language do you

prefer? English or Spanish?"

She laughed. Airy, full laughter, trembling, like her voice on the brink of music and falling in sparkling cascades into an ocean of melody. "But you are bold!" she cried. "Bold as

brass."

"Not at all," said Hayden politely,
"All this crystal-gazing is very interesting, very pretty and effective, and
serves admirably to show just as much
of your hand as you desire me to know.
By the way, mademoiselle—why 'mademoiselle' with Mariposa? Why not
'señorita'?"

"Euphony," she laughed, "nothing more, I assure you. It is more musical."

"Exactly. But come, mademoiselle,

let us get down to business."

She appeared to ponder this proposition a moment. "Bah!" she cried suddenly. "You are right, quite right. It is an opportunity not to be wasted. But one moment, I cannot talk with this on."

She swept off the mantilla and threw it aside. Her brown hair was rolled and twisted in great coils about her head, there were tendrils of it which sprang thickly about her brow and neck. The mask which concealed her face was held by a ribbon tied at the back of her head. She pulled at this but only succeeded in knotting it, and with an exclamation of impatience, she bent toward Hayden, murmuring:

"Please, señor."

He skilfully untied the knot, but while at this occupation the tendrils, shining like gold in the warm, yellow glow of the moon skylight, curled about his fingers, electric, tingling, leaving a faint, stinging remembrance.

"Oh, thank you."

She pulled off the mask and tossed it aside with a long breath of relief, and looked up, encountering Hayden's curious and admiring gaze. In that moment of unveiling, he saw before him

a lady of high emprise.

"A diamond-drill of a woman!" cried Robert to himself; and the steel of him paid her gallant homage, homage all the more sincere in that she asked it not, neither craved nor stooped to win it. All she asked was the game, the game with the odds against her. Cool, resourceful, she was concerned with neither doubts nor scruples. To such natures all roads lead to Rome. Before them lies the city of their hopes, That the roads are rocky and beset with unknown perils does not alarm, deter, or even particularly interest them. They see only Rome.

In that brief scrutiny permitted himself by a well-bred man, Hayden decided that she was a gipsy. Her rather short face, with the full, square chin,

was of a clear brown; her intense and vivid eyes were green, a beautiful and rare shade of olive. Her mouth was large, merry and inscrutable, with a particularly short upper lip, a mouth as reckless as *Mercutio's*. It would be difficult to say which impression predominated, beauty or force of character, or if, indeed, one could be disassociated from the other. Divorced from the sheer individuality, power which she expressed in every movement, every line of face and figure, would she have been beautiful at all?

While Robert considered this question the Mariposa looked at her watch, then touched an electric bell. It was answered by her private secretary, a dark, pale, colorless young woman whom Hayden had not seen before.

"Eunice," said the Mariposa carelessly, "I do not wish to be disturbed for an hour. Whoever calls within that time, tell them that it is impossible for me to give them a reading to-day. Make other appointments for them at as early a date as possible. That is all." The depressed young woman bowed and withdrew.

"It is exactly half-after three, Mr. Hayden." She snapped her watch shut. "Now we can talk. I fancy you are quite right. The crystal really did not

cut very much ice."

"You think then that we will probably find an interest in common?" he said.

"Undoubtedly. Several of them, per-

haps."

He bent nearer. "Including mines?" he suggested.

She showed her white and even teeth. "Including mines," she repeated.

"But first," he said impetuously, "do allay the curiosity which, I assure you, would otherwise continue to come between me and any business matters we might discuss."

She looked at him with an inquiry which held a sort of prescient reserve. He could see that if not actually on guard, she held herself in readiness to

be so.

"What do you mean?"

"You," he said daringly. "I have sat

here watching and waiting to catch you tripping in that faultless accent of yours. It must be real. I have lived too much in Southern countries to be deceived."

She looked gratified, her pleasure showing itself in a deepening color. "It was adopted for business purposes, now it has become second nature. I, too, have lived much in Southern countries. The Romany strain, my mother was a gipsy. You are a brother, Mr. Hayden, if not in blood, in kind. That kind that is so much more than kin. You are here to-day, there to-morrow. The doom of the wanderer is on you, and the blessing. Take it on the word of a fortune-teller." She spread out her hands smiling her wide, gay smile with a touch of irony, of feminine experience, the serpent-bought wisdom of Eve in it. "You know what it means to hear the red gods calling, calling; to know that no matter what binds you, whether white arms or ropes of gold, you've got to go."

"You show yourself a true daughter of the road, senorita, and a student of Kipling. We brothers of the wild are usually not much given to books."

"That is true," she assented. "I have heard them say: 'We know cities and deserts, men and women of every race. What can books give us?' But I tell them: 'Everything can pay us.toll if we ask it. A star in the sky, the tiniest grain of sand on the beach. We can demand their secrets and they will not withhold them." She mused a moment. "One must learn from all sources, knock upon every door. When I weary of gaining wisdom from the ant or considering the way of a serpent on the rock, or the way of a man with a maid, why, I turn to books. They are my solace, my narcotics, my friends, and my teachers. I take a few, a very few with me on any rough journey I may be making; but when I am here or in London or Paris, any place where I may be living for months at a time, I have my books about me."

"But why do you tell fortunes?" asked Hayden involuntarily, and immediately flushed to the roots of his

hair. There was the vaguest something in her smiling gaze, the merest flicker of an eyelash, which convicted him of impertinence. "Forgive me. I—I beg your pardon," he stammered.

She ignored his apologies. "Some day I will tell you," she whispered, go-"Some ing through a pantomime of looking about her cautiously as if it were a state secret of the most tremendous importance. "But we have talked enough about myself now, señor; the topic for discussion to-day was mines.

"An interesting subject might be The eiled Mariposa," he said.

Veiled Mariposa,

"Just so. Why beat about the bush?" He felt that she disdained subterfuges, although when necessary for her purposes, he was assured that she could use diplomacy, as a master of fence might his foils. "You, Mr. Hayden, have been lucky enough to find the lost Mariposa, the lost Veiled Mariposa. Is it not so? But you are in a peculiarly tantalizing position. You cannot convert gold into gold. Strange. It sounds so simple. But your hands are tied.'

"Perfectly true," Havden assented. "To descend from metaphor to plain business facts, I cannot organize a company and begin to operate the mine or rather group of mines, for the reason that I cannot secure a clear title, and what is worse, I have not, so far, succeeded in finding any trace of the present owners. That is," he corrected himself, "my previous efforts to find any trace of them do not seem success-

ful."

"Your tone leads me to infer-" "I think you know what my tone in-

fers," he said pleasantly. "That I think, that I am quite sure, that I have found the owners, at least one of them."

"Yes?" Her tone still questioned.

"And what then?"

"Well," he went slowly now, "there are some questions I would like to ask them. They may regard it as an awful impertinence; but it would be a lot of satisfaction to me."

"What would be the nature of those

questions?"

"Among other things"—he still spoke

slowly, seeming to consider his words-"I should like to ask them why, for years now, they should have let a valuable property remain idle. Even if they have the wealth of Midas it is still a puzzle. No one is ever quite rich enough, you know, and down there is Tom Tiddler's ground to their hand."

"Well what do you make of it-this puzzle?" She was looking steadily at a ring she was turning about on her fin-

ger.
"This!" He leaned forward. For the life of him he could not keep a faint ring of triumph out of his tone. "This, señorita. There is only one reasonable, credible solution-" He paused cruel-

"Yes?" Her eyes were on his, eager,

almost voracious. "Yes?"

"The present owners cannot locate the mine, or else they think it not worth the trouble and expense of attempting to do so. That they have allowed the estate to lie idle and in a measure go to waste is also curious and puzzling. I cannot explain that."

"Admitting such a thing for the sake of argument," she asked, "what then?"

"Well, I think we will have several things to say to each other then. For, if either of my suppositions is anywhere near correct their hands are tied just as much as mine, so I think we will have to talk business, do not you?"

"I quite agree with you and I should add, the sooner the better.

"The sooner the better," he echoed, with emphasis.

She nodded. Again she studied her nails, pink as almond-flowers, with in-

"And you really believe, you are quite convinced that this lost or abandoned mine is all that tradition says of it?"

she asked at last.

"More." he replied laconically. have prospected over every foot of it, and I know that it contains a fortune. A fortune"-he struck the table with the palm of his hand-"beyond the dreams of avarice."

There were dancing sparkles in her green eyes. "Let me congratulate you, 'O gallant knight, gaily bedight, in sunshine or in shadow,' that you have been lucky enough to find Eldorado."

She rose in a sweeping impetuosity, drew up her slender height, and made him a curtsy, a flower bending buoyantly to the breeze, and springing upright

again.

"But"—two or three sliding steps of the fandango, and then in her chair— "where did you find Eldorado? That's the history a daughter of the road wants to know. Is it truly 'over the mountains of the moon, down the valley of the shadow'?"

She swept him along on the tide of her high spirits; her laughter ran silver cascades down to the ocean of melody; her sun-flecked eyes held the heart-warming glow, the stimulation of wine. She was a breeze blowing from

the South.

"The romance!" she cried. "Behold an anomaly! Some one actually longing for a traveler's tale. Begin!" Her voice rang imperious, alluring.

Hayden almost caught at the table, a giddiness of the mind, perhaps of the senses, confused him. His face was a

shade paler.

"It is too plain and rough a tale to be told except as a matter of business. You are kind; but I should not venture to

bore you."

She accepted temporary defeat nonchalantly. "But you"—she did not change her position even by the movement of a finger, and yet, the whole expression of her figure became suddenly tense as a strung bow—"are you so sure that you could ever find your way thither again?"

He looked at her in surprise. "You give me very little credit for ordinary common sense, mademoiselle," he said shortly. "Of course, I made a map, and have any number of photographs." Immediately, he could have bitten his

tongue.

"Ah, of course, naturally."

Her indifference, the absent-minded answer reassured him. He did not notice that her whole figure had relaxed.

There was a faint tap on the door and the subdued secretary stood on the threshold. "It is half-after four o'clock, mademoiselle, and your next client is waiting."

Hayden rose. "Time's up," he said. "But, señorita, when do you think the heirs will be ready to talk business?"

"I think I can promise you an interview within a very short time; and in the meantime I will communicate with you. Oh, by the way, in private and domestic life, my name is Carrothers, Ydo Carrothers. Y-d-o," spelling it, "pronounced Edo."

"Ydo," he exclaimed. "It is a name made in Spain; in color it is red and yellow, and it smells of jasmine."

"Yes." She laughed at his description. "The Romany strain again, you see."

"One moment," he insisted. "How did you know my traveler's tale? Was it Penfield?"

"Never mind. It is sufficient that I know it. Good-by." She held out her hand, "You can't say I haven't told you a good fortune, can you?"

As Hayden passed through the narrow hall he saw sitting in the receptionroom the next client—the gray-haired
man with whom Marcia had dined that
evening at the Gildersleeve. But a further surprise awaited him; for just as
he reached the door leading from the
apartment the rosy and smiling little
maid was admitting Wilfred Ames.
Hayden almost ran into him, and Ames,
with a stare, muttered a surly recognition and passed on in.

CHAPTER IX.

"Quite right."

Hayden regarded his calendar approvingly. The large red and gold letters stared at him proclaiming arrogantly: "Every day is the best day of the year." And was it not true? Yesterday had proved indeed a day of destiny. It had brought him the assurance of a hope; the confirmation of a hesitant belief that the owners of the lost Mariposa were within reach and, better still, were not entirely masters of the situation. And yesterday, too, he had met Ydo; and, perhaps, Hay-

den's thoughts had been as much occupied with her as with his discovered

but not possessed Eldorado.

But Ydo herself was a sufficient excuse for that. And this was another day. A daring thought came to him. Why not assist Fate and make it the best day in the year-a day that should be Marcia's. At this brilliant idea he looked at his watch and then rushed to the telephone. Surely Marcia, even conscientious Marcia who worked painstakingly at her pretty little water-colors every day, would not have left for her studio. He would throw dice with Destiny again to-day and push his luck. With this determination, he rang up the residence of Mrs. Oldham. There was a moment or two of delay, and then Marcia's voice answered. Hayden mentioned the beauty of the day-it was overcast-the charm of this soft and mild weather—an east wind blew piercingly-and diffidently assumed that after a day in her studio, she would as usual take the air by walking home through the Park.

"Yes-s-s, she probably would."

Then since he had hoped to call upon her mother that afternoon, might he not join her and walk up with her, and would she not be leaving her brushes and canvases early, at half-after four, for instance.

"Yes-s-s, he said four o'clock, did he not?" Fate again honored him, she would be at the Plaza then calling on a

friend.

Hayden had won in his dice-throwing and Fate took defeat handsomely. granting him his desires and throwing a favor or two for lagnappe. By four o'clock the wind had veered, the clouds no longer betokened rain, broken spars of sunshine dazzled over the gold of the Sherman statue, sparkled in the harness of prancing horses, and brightened the whiteness of the great hotel. It was early in March, which, by the way, had decided to enter like a meek little lamb this year instead of advancing with the mien of an angry and roaring lion. The air was cool and fresh and yet held all manner of soft, indescribable intimations of spring. The sky was a sheet of pale gold, the trees were a purple mist against it.

Hayden drew a long breath of happiness as Marcia's steps fell in with his; the sense of contentment and well-being which her mere presence always afforded him seemed the more soothing and potent this afternoon than ever before. Since yesterday, there had run high in his veins the fever of acquisition, and Ydo's personality had disturbed and stimulated until she had wrought in him a sort of mental confusion. But Marcia at his side, smiling in the shadow of her plumed hat, the familiar violets nestling in her dark furs, seemed the visible embodiment of all these soft, sweet intimations of spring. Not yet jocund, as spring come into her own crowned with flowers and laughing through her silver rain; but a wistful spring still held in the thraldom of winter.

"What have you been doing that makes you look a little pale?" asked

Hayden tenderly.

"Am I pale?" She smiled at him.
"I dare say. I have been painting the greater part of every day and going out a good deal in the evening."

"What an idler I must seem to you who are always so occupied," he said.

"Not at all. I, too, take vacations. But tell me how you have been idling lately."

"I idled, if you call it that," he said, "yesterday afternoon at the wonderful

fortune-teller's."

"Oh, you have seen Ydo?" Marcia lifted her head involuntarily, and then meeting his surprised gaze, the color flooded her cheeks. It kept on rolling up in waves.

Seeing her embarrassment, he was at pains to suppress his astonishment.

"Yes," he said as naturally as he possibly could under the circumstances. "Yes, she gave me quite a long reading. Isn't that the professional word for it—reading?"

"I-I believe so." She had not entirely recovered herself. "And are you

quite convinced of her powers?"

He gave a short laugh. "Oh, quite. More than convinced. I never should question them. Mine is the fate of the scoffer. The most rabid persecutor is merely the reverse side of the bigoted proselyter. Upon me rests not the curse that follows the tolerant. They get nowhere. 'Because thou art neither hot nor cold I spew thee from my mouth,'

"Really!" It was plain she was a little puzzled, and took refuge in the conveniently, unexpressive "really." "Did she tell you a good fortune?"

"How can I say? Fortune is always

in the future."

"You are teasing me and telling me nothing," she declared, "and you are laughing, laughing, too, as if over some

secret and mysterious joke."

"I am laughing," he said, suddenly serious, "but not over any of the revelations of Mademoiselle Mariposa, I can assure you; and to show you my faith in her prophecies, I am going to tell you something." He was grave enough now. "And yet, I wonder—perhaps——"

"Perhaps what?"

"Perhaps you will find no interest in

what I want to say."

She looked up at him quickly, surprise in her glance. "How absurd! I do not see why you say such things. Why should you fancy that I would not be interested in anything you have to tell me?"

They had turned down a narrow lane of trees, and the skies a deeper and more luminous gold were in a net of bare, black twigs. The wind bore the fragrance of Marcia's violets past Hay-

den's nostrils.

"But you may not feel so when I tell you that I love you, Marcia." His voice low and unsteady thrilled her heart. "I realize the rashness of the whole thing; but I do love you, Marcia."

There was a moment's silence, a silence when Hayden's heart-beats sounded louder than the patter of their feet on the concrete pavements or the distant and mighty roar of the city—and then Marcia lifted her eyes to his,

In a moment the miracle had happened. Above them stretched the same gold sky in its intricate and broken nets, the wind blew softly; but they two had stepped across the boundaries of commonplace days and straight into Arcady. Flowers bloomed, birds sang, and the soul of the spring was in their hearts. But, curiously enough, though they were in Arcady, they were also in the Park. Hayden looked up the little lane; north and south marched an unending line of people. They were in Arcady, but deprived of its ancient privilege of sylvan and umbrageous solitude.

She was the first to speak. "Why is it absurd?" And her clear voice trem-

bled a little.

"How can it be, as things stand, anything but absurd?" he answered bitter-"I am simply an engineer on my vacation, who when that is over will return to the wilds. Oh, Marcia, how can I in common decency ask you to marry me? I cannot yet, but I do ask you to let me love you, to forgive me for telling you of my feeling for you, and believe me when I tell you that I would not have had the courage to mention the subject if I did not feel almost sure of a change of fortune. I don't want to tell you just yet. I'm trying not to tell you; but dearest, loveliest Marcia, I believe I'm on the eve of success. I can almost close my fingers around it, and then you will let me tell you I love you, won't you, dearest? Yes, laugh at me, I don't mind."

"But suppose, just suppose this wonderful fortune never does materialize," she said half-teasingly but still tremulously, a smile on her lips and a tear

in her eye. "What then?"

"Never suppose it. It can't help it," he cried confidently. "Why even now I can see particles of gold in the air. To-morrow, next day, the day afterward, we shall have our cake. Will you eat it with me, Marcia, if it's a nice, brown, plum-y cake?"

"You make too many conditions," she said demurely. "I don't care for very rich cake myself. Suppose the cake should not turn out particularly well in the baking? Wouldn't you offer me a

piece anyway-Bobby?"

Again he looked up the path and down the path; people still hastening

to and fro. Aready was infested with toilers hurrying home to supper.

"I'd try not to," he said manfully, keeping his eyes resolutely away from hers. "Oh, Marcia, I can't be certain, I'd try not to. I couldn't bear to see you eating underdone cake. It would only mean misery to you. Your man-

ner of life---'

"My manner of life!" she interrupted him scornfully. "Ah, what is my manner of life! Do you fancy that I am deaf as a post and blind as an adder? Do you think that I do not know some of the things that are spoken of me, by Mrs. Ames, for instance, or Horace Penfield, or even Edith Symmes? Do you fancy any word of that tittle-tattle escapes me? Sometimes it is repeated, or hinted in malice; sometimes as from Bea or Kitty in fright, as a warning, almost a prayer. I know that I lay myself open to gossip; but I cannot help it, at least at present. It is impossible for me to alter things just now.

"I know," he murmured tenderly. "I am sure of it. I have realized something of this from the first moment that I met you. But always since that moment I could stake my life on this, that any-any mystery that might seem to exist was not of your making or choos-And I want to assure you of something, to make you believe it if necessary; and that is, dear, dear Marcia, if you never choose to unravel the

tangle I shall still be content."

She looked at him a moment in absolute, speechless wonder, and then tears. happy tears brimmed in her eyes. how glad I shall be to unravel it!" She breathed deeply. "How glad! Wait a little—a week, a fortnight. Ah!" She caught herself up hastily. "Come, see how late! It is growing dark and the lights are beginning to twinkle out, and they tell me, even if you will not, that it is time I ran home and got dressed. I'm to dine at Bea Habersham's to-You must come in with me when we reach home and let mother give you a cup of tea. You are a tremendous favorite of hers. And then you can drive as far as Bea's with me,

and I will have the chauffeur take you on home. Will you?"

"Will I? Will I? Thank you very much, Miss Oldham, for your amiability in suggesting such a thing; but I could not possibly take advantage of your kindness." If the wit of this sally may be judged by the manner in which it was received Hayden had just uttered one of the great bon-mots of the

"I hope," said Marcia presently, a touch of apprehension in her tone, "that some one has been to see mother this afternoon. Poor dear! She always feels a little aggrieved if no one

comes.

"Let us appease any possible disappointment she may have suffered by taking her a present," suggested Hayden, fired by inspiration. "Women, children, every one likes presents, do

they not? Come, let us find shops."
"What an adventurer you are!" laughed Marcia, letting him lead her across the street, a confusion crowded with swiftly moving vehicles and cars, for they had now left the twilight shadows and comparative seclusion of the Park and debouched upon the noisy thoroughfare.

"You will have to make a quick decision," she added as they came upon a region of many brilliant shops and sidewalks crowded with people. "What will you take her, fruit or flowers?"

But Hayden was too happy to consider any topic with gravity. "We will take her a swan-boat, or one of the Hesperidian apples, or the Golden

Fleece."

And although Marcia spent herself in urging him to stick to the conservative fruit and flowers, he insisted on following his own vagrant fancy, and at last decided upon an elaborate French basket of pale-blue satin covered with shirrings of fine tulle. The lid was a mass of artificial flowers, violets and delicate pink roses, and within the satin-lined depths was a bunch of Hamburg grapes.

This, when finally and carefully wrapped, made a huge package; but Hayde., insisted on carrying it, assuring Marcia that every one they met would be sure that he was carrying home the turkey for their Sunday dinner. He bore it ostentatiously, and took particular glee in any passing attention they excited.

"You act as if you were twenty, instead of well-let me guess your age," looking at him with keen scrutiny. "About thirty-five," said Marcia cruelly.

He stopped short to gaze at her with pained reproach. "I am Youth! Incarnate Youth, just eighteen. No doubt to your dulled materialistic vision I appear to wear a coat and hat. Is that true?" with polite, tolerant patience.

"It certainly appears that way to me," she replied. "What do you imagine

yourself to be wearing?"

"And I dare say," he continued still patiently, "that you imagine you and I are strolling about in one of the shopping districts of New York?"

"Yes," nodding affirmatively. "Where

else?'

"Wretched, purblind girl! Thirtyfive indeed! Why, I am eighteen, and clad in the hide of a leopard with a wreath of roses on my brow, and you, sweet Œnone, are wandering with me on the slopes of Ida-and we are taking your mother, not one, but a peck of golden apples.

"All things considered," said Marcia significantly, "I am glad we have

reached our own door.'

They found Mrs. Oldham in good spirits in consequence of having seen a number of people who had had sufficient tact duly to admire her new costume worn for the first time this afternoon. She had given much consideration to all the effects of the picture she wished to create, and now sat in an especial chair in an especial part of the room, a vision in pale gray and orchid tints most skilfully mingled. Her feet, in orchid silk stockings, and slippers adorned with great choux of gray chiffon, looked on their footstool as if they were a part of the decorations of the room and had never served the utilitarian purpose of conveyance.

"Oh, I am glad to see you!" she

cried, peering past Marcia to Hayden who followed, almost obscured by his great package. She stretched out a hand for him to take, not disarranging her pose by rising and thus spoiling the composition. "Marcia, you're dreadfully late, as usual," a touch of fretfulness in her voice.

"I know," replied her daughter, "and now, I'm going to leave Mr. Hayden to you. Give him some tea, won't you? I'm dining at the Habershams, you know, and he will drive down with me

after a while."

"Of course I'll give Mr. Hayden some tea. Send in some hot water, Marcia." She leaned forward, still careful not to move her feet and fussed with the tea things on the table by her side, "I am very glad to see you," she murmured again. "Ah, Mr. Hayden, if it were not for my friends I should be a very lonely woman. You understand, of course, that I do not complain. Marcia is the dearest girl that ever was, so lovely and attractive. Oh, dear, yes. But," with an upward glance of resignation, "quite young people are apt to be thoughtless, you know, and Marcia's social life is so much to her, and indeed, I am unselfish enough to be truly glad that it is so; it really is a great bond between dear Wilfred and herself; but of course it leaves me much alone; and it is not good for me to be thrown back on myself and my own sad thoughts so much. Mr. Oldham always recognized that fact. 'Change, constant diversion is an absolute necessity to one of your sensitive, high-strung nature,' he would so often say, but," with a long-drawn sigh, "no one thinks enough about me to feel that way now."

"Don't say that," said Hayden cheerfully. "I may not be any one, but I've been thinking about you. Look! I carried this enormous bundle through the streets just for you. Be careful.

It's heavy.

She flushed with pleasure through her delicately applied rouge, and stretching out her hands for her gift began eagerly to unwind the various tissue-papers which concealed it. The last of these discarded, she placed it in the middle of the table and spent herself in ecstatic phrases, melting from pose to pose of graceful admiration.

"Ah, Mr. Hayden," with one of her archest glances, "you remind me so much of Mr. Oldham." Hayden had a swift, mental picture of that grim old pirate of finance, as represented by his portraits and photographs, his shrewd, rugged old face surrounded by Horace Greeley whiskers. "He never came home without bringing me something. Sometimes it was just a flower, or some fruit, and again it was a jewel. You can't fancy, Mr. Hayden, no words of mine can express to you his constant thought and care for me. You take lemon in your tea, do you not? thought so. I always remember those little things about my friends. And he had such faith in my business judgment, too. He would often discuss business with me and ask my opinion on this or that matter; and he always, without exception, acted on my advice. He used to say—so foolish of him—that he could not understand why he should have been so favored as to have found a combination of beauty and brains in one woman."

"It is rare, but as I understand now, not impossible." Hayden took his cue

nobly

"Oh, Mr. Hayden!" A reproving finger was shaken at him with the archest coquetry. "If you talk that way I sha'n't give you another cup of tea, no matter how hard you beg. But where was I? Oh, yes, I was telling you that Mr. Oldham so often discussed business matters with me."

"And did they interest you?" asked Hayden vaguely, wondering how soon he could possibly expect Marcia to re-

turn.

"Oh, yes, I found it often more thrill-

ing than the printed page."

"Most men do," he replied dryly. "I didn't know that women felt that way."

"I did." Mrs. Oldham nodded her head in modest acceptation of the fact that she was the exceptional woman. "I found it not only thrilling, but often so romantic. I do not see why people

will speak of 'the dry details of business.' I think it is full of romance."

Hayden stared at her with the amazement her mental processes always aroused in him.

"It never seemed exactly within the range of romantic subjects to me," he said dubiously; "but perhaps that's the

way I've been looking at it."

"Certainly it is," she affirmed triumphantly. "Now I'll prove it to you. As I often say to young people, Mr. Hayden: 'Never make an assertion unless you can prove it.' Now, I distinctly remember Mr. Oldham telling me of a most romantic business matter. A lost mine of almost unthinkable value which was on an old estate somewhere in Brazil, or no, Peru. Why, what is the matter, Mr. Hayden? Your eyes are almost popping out of your head. You look as if you had seen a ghost."

Hayden caught himself together. "It is only that it is so interesting. Do go on and let me hear the rest of it."

Mrs. Oldham smiled, well pleased at the tribute to her powers as a raconteuse. "Well, there isn't much to tell. I've forgotten the details, and they were so romantic, too; but Mr. Oldham seriously considered buying it."

"And did he buy it?" Hayden's hands were trembling in spite of himself. "This is so intensely interesting, one would like to hear the conclusion of

the story.

But Mrs. Oldham only shook her head. "I don't know," she said vaguely. "I think he did; but I can't be

sure."

She began another long story, but Hayden, after listening to enough of it to assure himself that it had no bearing on The Veiled Mariposa, gave himself up to the confused conjectures, the hopes, the dreams that thronged his brain.

Was it a possibility that Marcia, Marcia, might be the heiress of the great Mariposa estate? The owner, or one of the owners of it? He felt overcome by the bare mental suggestion. But was it a possibility, even a dim and remote one? Accepting this as a temporary hypothesis, was it not borne out by cer-

tain facts? The butterflies, for instance. Did not those jeweled ornaments symbolize in some delicate, fanciful way, Marcia's way, her ownership of The Veiled Mariposa? And would not that ownership also account for the muchquestioned source of her wealth? He stopped with a jerk up against a dead wall. The Mariposa mine had not been worked for years; the ranches were cultivated only by the Spaniard in possession. These facts were like a dash of cold water, extinguishing the flame of his hopes. And yet, and yet, the butterflies! But that, he was forced to admit, might be the merest coincidence.

On that chain of evidence he would find it necessary to regard his cousin, Kitty Hampton, Mrs. Habersham, the London actress, a score of women, as possible owners of his Golconda. Nevertheless, in spite of reason, he could not escape the conviction, unfounded but persistent, that those butterflies were in some way connected with the ownership of that distant lost mine. And this purely intuitive belief was suddenly strengthened by the remembrance of Marcia's embarrassment in the Park, an hour or two before, when she had involuntarily and inadvertently spoken of Mademoiselle Mariposa familiarly as Ydo.

"Yes, Mrs. Oldham, I quite agree with you. As you say: 'One cannot be too careful.' Oh, no, I never was more interested in my life."

Ydo! Ydo! He took up the thread of his absorbing reflections again as Mrs. Oldham's voice purled on reciting with infinite detail all the data of one of her Helenlike conquests, Ydo! What bond could exist between the reserved, even haughty Marcia in spite of all her gentleness, and the capricious, wayward, challenging Ydo? A bond sufficiently strong to permit the affectionate familiarity of first names? He had from the beginning believed that Ydo had some interest in the property, although he had never been able satisfactorily to guess the nature of it. But Marcia! The mere possibility of her being interested in what Ydo merrily called his Eldorado had never struck

him before, and his brain was bewildered by the thousand new trains of

conjecture it started.

At this point his reflections were broken in upon by the entrance of Marcia herself. She was all in white with the big, ruby-eyed butterfly on her bosom, and the chain of butterflies about her throat. She looked more radiant than he had ever seen her as she stood before them drawing on her long gloves. Her eyes, no longer sad with all regret, were like deep blue stars, and her smile was full of a soft and girlish happiness.

"You look very well, Marcia," said her mother critically. "A new gown of course. How differently they are

cutting the skirts!"

"It's a lovely gown," affirmed Havden, smiling down into Marcia's eyes, "After all, a simple white frock is the prettiest thing a woman can wear.'

"Simple!" Mrs. Oldham's mirth was high and satiric. "Isn't that like a man? Simple is the last word to be applied to Marcia's frocks, Mr. Hayden. It's a good thing, as I often tell her, that her father left us so well provided for."

The lovely happiness vanished from Marcia's eyes. She looked quickly at her mother with an almost frightened expression, and then, with eyelashes lowered on her cheek, went silently on drawing on her gloves, two or three tense little lines showing about her

mouth.

"I think Miss Oldham is very unkind," said Havden, with some idea of bridging the situation gracefully, "never to have shown me any of her pictures. She paints, paints all day long, and yet will not give one a glimpse of the results. Kitty Hampton has been promising to show me some of the watercolors she has, but she has not vet done so."

"Have you been talking much to Mr. Hayden of your pictures, Marcia?"

asked her mother suavely.

The tone was pleasant, even casual, and yet, Hayden, sensitive, intuitive, had a quick, shocked sense of having blundered egregiously; and worse, he

had a further sense of Mrs. Oldham's words being fraught with some ugly and hidden meaning. In her voice there had been manifest an unsuspected quality which had revealed her for the moment as not all frivolous fool or spoiled and empty-headed doll; but a tyrant and oppressor, crueller and more menacing because infinitely weak and unstable.

Marcia did not reply at all to her mother's question, but with the lashes still downcast, continued to button her gloves; and Hayden stood, miserably uncomfortable for a moment, and then was forced to doubt the correctness of his swift, unpleasant impression; for Mrs. Oldham observed in her usual

petulant, inconsequent tones:

"I don't know that I like that necklace with that frock, Marcia. turquoises would look better. I do get so tired of always seeing you with some kind of a butterfly ornament. You never showed the slightest interest in butterflies before your father died, and you don't, in the least, suggest a butterfly. I cannot understand it."

"Don't try, mother dear," said Marcia. "Good-by." She kissed the orchid and gray lady lightly on the top of the head. "Have a good time with your Hamburg grapes and your last new

novel."

She slipped her arms through the long white coat Hayden held for her and, followed by him, left the room.

"Marcia, dear, sweet Marcia," he coaxed, as they whirled through the streets in her electric brougham. "I'm sure, almost dead sure, it's going to be a nice, well-baked, plum-y cake. If it is won't you promise to eat it with me? You know you didn't definitely promise this afternoon, and I never could stand uncertainty."

"No," she said positively, drawing her hand away from his, "I will not. I will never give you a definite answer until you offer me a share in the cake, no matter how it turns out in the

baking."

"How can I?" he groaned. "You do not know what sort of a life it would be, the hardships, the deprivations, the necessarily long separations when I would have to be in some place utterly impossible for you, for months at a time. It's the very abomination of desolation. And fancy your trying to adapt yourself to it! You used to this!" rapping the electric. "And this, and this! touching lightly the ermine on her cloak and the jewels at her throat. "No." He shook his head doggedly. "I won't. I know what it means and you do not. Lovely butterfly"--the tenderness of his voice stirred her heart-strings-"do you think that I could bear to see you beaten to earth, your bright wings torn and faded by the cruel storms? Never. But," with one of his quick, mercurial changes of mood, "it's an alternative that we do not have to face. For it's coming out all right in the baking-that cake. The most beautiful cake you ever saw, Marcia, with a rich, brown crust, and more plums than you ever dreamed of in a cake before.'

CHAPTER X.

"Bobby," said Kitty Hampton one evening as they sat alone together in her drawing-room, "things are slow. deadly slow. Why do not you do something to amuse your little cousin?"

"My little cousin has far more amusement than is good for her as it is," returned Hayden. "But while you're mentioning this, let me say that I am anxious to evince some appreciation of all the hospitality you and Mrs. Habersham and one or two others have shown me: but I don't know just what

Kitty sat up with a marked accession of interest in her expression and attitude. "Dear me! There are quantities of things you could do," she said. "But, Bobby, do get out of the beaten track; try and think of something original. Of course, it's all nonsense, about feeling under obligation to any one for socalled hospitality, but there is no reason why you should not provide some fun. Now, what shall it be?

"Anything you say," remarked Hayden amiably. "To tell the truth, Kitty, I've been longing to ask you just what I should do. What can you suggest?"

"It requires thought." Kitty spoke seriously. "But be assured of this: I'm not going to suggest any of the same old things. If you want something really delightful and have a desire to have us truly enjoy ourselves you must have just a few congenial people. Better make it a dinner, I think. That is it. A dinner at your apartment," catching joyously at this idea, "with some original, clever features.

"I thought whatever it was"—Hayden had reddened perceptibly-"I'd like it to be-a-a-compliment, in a

way, to Miss Oldham."

"I do not doubt it." Kitty surveyed

him with amused eyes.

"I always think of her in connection with the butterflies she wears so much. Would it be a possibility to carry the butterfly idea out in some way?" he asked.

Kitty clapped her hands. She was all animation and enthusiasm now. The habitual, sulky-little-boy expression had quite vanished from her face. "Beautiful! Just the idea! You couldn't have thought of a better one. The butterfly lady has had a great fascination for you, hasn't she, Bobby?"

"Which one?" he asked quickly. "Which one? Hear that!" His cousin apostrophized space. "Why, I was thinking of Marcia, of course."

He smiled a little and became momentarily lost in reverie, his chin in the palm of his hand, and dreaming thus, Kitty's old French drawing-room and Kitty herself, her blond prettiness accentuated and enhanced by the delicate pinks and blues of her gown, vanished, and Marcia seemed to stand before him all in black and silver as he had seen her recently at a ball, with violets, great purple violets, falling below the shining butterfly on her breast, her sweet and wistful smile curving her lips and her eyes full of light and happiness.

"Bobby, come back!" Kitty touched him petulantly on the arm. "You've been a million miles away, and you looked so selfishly happy that I feel all

shivery and out in the cold."

"Kitty," he said, "I will confess, when I said, 'Which one?' I was thinking not only of Miss Oldham, but of the other butterfly lady—the Mariposa. You know Mariposa means butterfly. Well, it is really the Mariposa who fascinates me.

"Bobby! What on earth do you mean?" Kitty's expression was a mixture of disappointment and indignation.

"Just what I say. The Mariposa fascinates me; but, Kitty," his face softening, "I love the fairy princess with all my heart. I have loved her from the first moment I saw her.'

"How dear! I have thought so, hoped so, for some time." Her face was all aglow. "But you frightened me dreadfully, just now. I was afraid you had gone over to Mademoiselle Mariposa like Wilfred Ames. He is crazy

about her, simply crazy.

"Wilfred Ames! Crazy about the Mariposa!" exclaimed Hayden incredulously; and then he paused, remembering that it was but recently that he had met Ames at the door of Ydo's apartment.

"Yes." Kitty was sulky again. "It's true. And I wanted him for Marcia. But Marcia was stupid about it and always laughed at the idea. Horace Penfield says that he has completely swerved from his allegiance to Marcia. Just fancy how his mother will behave now. Good for her, I say. But, Bobby, have you told Marcia?"

"Yes. I couldn't help it, Kitty, but it wasn't fair. I had no right to say a word until I know how things are going to turn out with me and that, thank Heaven, will be settled in a day or so.'

He drew a long sigh,
"Bobby." Kitty was looking at him curiously, and a rather hard abruptness "Has she, had crept into her tone. Marcia, told you anything about these?" She touched the butterflies clasped

about her throat.

"No." He shook his head. "But I believe I have guessed their significance. And it has made me happier than I can tell you. It has made me feel that our interests are one, as if Destiny had intended us for each other.'

"I'm sure I don't see why it should,"

she said shortly, looking at him in a bewildered, disapproving way. "I didn't know you were that kind. It sounds awfully self-seeking. I do not believe you've guessed right." Her face brightened. "That is it. You've got some idea into your head, and it's evidently far from the correct one. You wouldn't be the Bobby I know if it were."

"Then tell me what the correct one is," he coaxed. "If I am on the wrong track, set me on the right one."

"Not I," she returned firmly. "The thing for us to decide is just what sort of a dinner you are going to have. You want some really interesting features. I insist on that."

He threw wide his arms. "I give you carte blanche, here and now, Kitty. All that I insist on are the butterfly effects. Beyond that, I leave everything in your hands; but I must have them."

Kitty.'s eyes gleamed with pleasure. She loved to manage other people's affairs. "I'll see to them," she affirmed. "Just give me a little time to think them up. What shall we have afterward? Some music?"

"So commonplace," he objected, "and the place is too small."

"Yes-s-s," she reluctantly agreed.
"And you don't want very many people. Just our own especial little group."

"It will have to be small," he warned her. "My quarters do not admit of anything very extensive."

"Whom shall we have?" Mrs. Hampton began to count on her fingers. "The Habershams, and Edith Symmes, and Horace Penfield, and Warren and myself, and Marcia, and Wilfred Ames, and yourself." She paused, a look of dismay overspreading her face. "We'll have to have another woman. Who on earth shall it be?"

"A butterfly dinner without the Mariposa would seem like 'Hamlet' with the *Prince* left out, wouldn't it?" suggested Hayden.

"Oh!" Kitty gasped joyously. "Mademoiselle Mariposa! Do, do, invite her. What fun! Do you think she will come? You know Marcia knows her,

but she will not talk about her ever, because, she says, Mademoiselle Mariposa has requested her not to. So she will not say where and how she met her. Mean thing! Of course, I've only seen her in her little mask and mantilla. You do not suppose she would wear them to a dinner, do you? I am dying to see her without them. Horace Penfield knows her very well and he says she is very beautiful and deliciously odd. If it enters into her head to do anything she just does it, no matter what it is. And extravagant!" Kitty lifted eyes and hands at once. "They say that her jewels and frocks are almost unbelievable. Why, one day when she was reading my palm, I noticed that her gown was drawn up a little on one side, and showed her petticoat beneath, with ruffles of Mechlin, real Mechlin on it. Some people say that she is a Spanish princess, or something of the kind-so eccentric that she tells fortunes just for the fun of it. Oh, Bobby, do, do get her."

"When shall we have this dinner?" asked Hayden, with apparent irrelevance,

Kitty thought quickly, "Give'me ten days to decide upon things and have my orders carried out,"

"Very good. Ten days. Let me see, that will be Tuesday of week after next. Do you think the rest will come?"

"Of course they will come. They would break any other engagement to meet Mademoiselle Mariposa."

"Then I will find out now if she will come, if you will allow me to use your telephone."

He was lucky enough to find Ydo at home; but when he informed her that he was giving a dinner for a few friends on Tuesday, ten days away, and that he earnestly desired her presence, she demurred.

"What are you doing this evening?" he asked.

"Nothing," she answered, "and I am bored,"

"Then jump into your electric and come here to my cousin's, Mrs. Warren Hampton's, as fast as you can," he said audaciously.

"How do you know she wants me? You are taking a great deal on your-

self."

For answer Havden handed the receiver to Kitty, who had followed him out and now stood at his shoulder listening breathlessly to every word. "Mademoiselle is in doubt of your eagerness to see her," he said.

"Oh, please come," urged Kitty through the telephone. "Waste no

time.'

"I will be with you in twenty min-

utes," said Ydo sweetly.

Back in the drawing-room, Kitty was too excited to remain quietly in her chair, but danced about expressing her delight at the prospect of at last seeing the Mariposa sans mask and mantilla.

"Tell me, Bobby," she insisted, "is

she really so eccentric?"

"I fancy she does exactly as she

pleases, always," he replied.

"And extravagant? Warren says no one could be more extravagant than I."

"She is a dreamer," he averred, "a dreamer who dreams true. Her ideas are so vivid that she insists on seeing them in tangible form. I don't believe she particularly counts the cost or the base material means by which these things must be accomplished."

"Fancy!" sighed Kitty. "Oh, I do hope she will wear one of her stunning gowns and some of those marvelous jewels they say she possesses, set in the most wonderful, quaint ways, Horace Penfield says. But surely she will."

"I think it likely," agreed Robert

amiably.

"And is she very clever and inter-

esting?" continued Kitty.

"She is herself," said Hayden. cannot describe her any other way. She may strike you as a bit staccato and stilted sometimes; but it is natural to her. She is always herself."

There was a faint sound of a curtain before the door being pushed aside, but this, Kitty and Hayden, absorbed in their conversation, had not heard, and now, Mrs. Hampton turned with a stifled scream to see a stranger, a gipsy, standing almost at her elbow.

"Pretty lady!" The English was

more deliciously broken than ever, and so cajoling was the whisper that it would have coaxed the birds off the trees and wheedled money from the stingiest pocket. "Pretty lady, let me tell your fortune. Cross my palm with silver. 'Tis the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter who asks you."

Kitty looked from the gipsy to Robert in bewilderment. This was not the dazzling figure in gauzes and satins and jewels she had expected, a capricious lady of a foreign and Southern nobility, whose whimsical and erratic fancy was occasionally amused by a change of rôle, This was a daughter of the long, brown path, who afoot and lighthearted took naturally to the open road, with the tanned cheek, white teeth, and

merry eyes of her kind.

And yet, if not the glittering vision Kitty had anticipated, Ydo was a sufficiently vivid and picturesque figure. Her short corduroy skirt had faded with wear and washing to a pale fawntint with a velvety bloom upon it; her brown boots were high and laced; her blue blouse had faded like her skirt to a soft and lovely hue. A red sash confined her waist, a handkerchief of the same color was knotted loosely about her throat, while a yellow scarf was tied about her head and fell in long ends down her back.

Kitty immediately recovered from the shock she had experienced at the unheralded advent of the strange visitor and endeavored to make up in warmth of greeting for the surprise she had

shown.

"Forgive me, instead," said Ydo, with charming penitence. "But I was the gipsy to-night in heart and feeling. I had to put on these. Oh," throwing herself into a chair, "I have suffered to-day. It has been coming on for days. Ennui. Do you know it, pretty lady? And the longing for mine own people."

"Your people are not in this country, are they?" asked Kitty politely.

The Mariposa drew her brows to-"Mv gether in a little puzzled frown. people!" she repeated. "Oh," with dawning comprehension, "you mean

relatives. I," with a short laugh, "I said mine own people. You," turning to Robert, "you understand. One of the greatest, most searching questions ever asked, and which must finally be answered by each of us from the promptings of his own heart, is: "Who is my brother and my sister?" Ah, I shall soon take to the road again. If I could only go now!"

"To find your own people," asked

Kitty timidly.

"One does not seek one's own," said Ydo disdainfully. "One does not 'scour the seas nor sift mankind a poet or a friend to find.' He comes, and you know him because he is a poor Greek like yourself. Dear lady" she broke into one of her airy rushes of laughter -"in spite of your smiles and all the self-control of a careful social training, you are the picture of bewilderment. See, you can keep no secrets from the fortune-teller. You cannot place me. Why do you try? I refused to be announced and mine was the fate of the listener. Brutus there is an honorable man who admits that I am extravagant, even if he condones it. Ah, madame, money is not wealth, it is a base counterfeit, a servant whom I bid to exchange itself for beauty. These"-she stripped the petals from a red rose in a vase near her, and tossed them in the air—"these are the real wealth of the world. And Brutus says I am stilted, exaggerated in my conversation, given to metaphor and hyperbole. That is because I dare to express what I feel, and since everywhere I see parables I voice them. Why not?

"And Brutus says I am eccentric, admitting that I dare to be myself; and to dare to be one's self, dear lady, is to dare everything. We are afraid of life, of love, of sorrow and joy, of everything. This fear of life is uni-

versal."

"And you, are you never afraid?"

asked Kitty.

"Of what?" laughed the gipsy. "Let me tell you a secret; and oh, madame, wear it next your heart, guard it. 'Tis a talisman against fear. The lions are always chained. Believe me, it is so. But our conversation is of a seriousness! Mr. Hayden spoke of a dinner."

"Yes, and he's given me permission to do just as I choose," said Kitty. "So it's got to be a success—"

"And she's trying to say," interrupted Hayden, "that it couldn't possibly be a success without you."

"Of course I am," agreed Kitty, "only I should have put it less bluntly."

"Wait! I have an inspiration." Ydo thought a moment. "I will not come to the dinner. We can make it much more effective than that. Ah, listen!" waving her hands to quell their protests. "Let me appear, later in the evening, in my professional capacity and tell the past, present and future of your guests. Yes, I will come in mask and mantilla, The Veiled Mariposa," with a dramatic gesture, a quick twinkle of the eyes toward Hayden. "I assure you, it will be far more interesting so."

"There is really no doubt about that," said Kitty thoughtfully, and together they silenced Robert's eloquent plea that the dinner would fall flat unless Ydo were one of the guests.

"It is settled, and I must go." The Mariposa spoke decisively. "I shall go home and make Eunice play for me, and perhaps I shall dance off some of my restlessness."

"Oh, dance for us," begged Kitty.
"I will play for you, and you see that
the piano is so placed that I can watch
you at the same time. What shall I
play? Some Spanish dances?"

Ydo, full of the spirit of the thing, considered. "I think I will show you a pretty little dance I learned down in

South America."

"South America!" Hayden started as if he had received an electric shock.

Perhaps a heightened color glowed on Mademoiselle Mariposa's cheek; but she gave no further sign of perturbation. "Yes," she answered carelessly, "I have lived there, in one place or another. Any one of those Spanish dances will do, Mrs. Hampton. Watch my steps. They are peculiar and very pretty."

As she stood there swaying like a flower in a breeze, it was, to Hayden's fancy, as if he had never seen color before. Kitty in her pinks and blues was a gay little figure; her drawingroom was a rich and sumptuously decorated apartment, but under the spell of the Mariposa's "woven paces and weaving hands," Mrs. Hampton appeared a mere Dresden statuette, the tapestried and frescoed walls became a pale and evanescent background, and Ydo alone, dancing, focused in herself all light and beauty; nay, she herself was the pride of life, the rhythm of motion, the glory of color.

On and on she danced and Hayden, watching, dreamed dreams and saw visions. She was the Mariposa floating over a field of flowers, scarlet and white poppies, opening and closing its gorgeous wings in the hot sunshine; she was a snowflake whirled from the heart of a winter storm; she was an orchid swaying in the breeze; she was a thistledown drifting through the grasses.

Then, at the height of her spells she stopped and laughingly cast herself into

a chair.

"Oh!" Kitty was breathless with admiration. "Oh, why, why, when you can dance like that, do you tell for-

tunes?"

"There's a reason," Ydo quoted, with a little toss of her head toward Hayden. "That is exactly the answer I made your cousin once before. And oh, señor, apropos of that reason, I have a conference arranged for you tomorrow afternoon at four o'clock at my apartment. I almost forgot to tell you. I meant to have telephoned."

Hayden's face flushed with pleasure. "Really?" he cried. "You really have the people together. Oh," with a long sigh, "it is good news. Suspense does wear on me, señorita." He spoke half humorously, but with an underlying

seriousness.

"It will soon be over," encouraged Ydo. "Then, until Tuesday night, ten days hence, au revoir, madame; and until to-morrow at four o'clock, au revoir, señor. Good luck forever be on

this house! In it I have forgotten temporarily my wanderlust. Good-by."

CHAPTER XI.

With his heart high with hope, Hayden lost no time in taking his way to Ydo's apartment the next afternoon. It was Sunday, a day on which she received no clients, and the maid showed him into neither the consulting nor reception-rooms, but into a small library beyond them which was evidently a part

of her private suite.

In coloring the room suggested the soft wood tones that Ydo loved, greens and browns and russets harmoniously blended. *The walls were lined with bookcases, crowded with books, a great and solacing company: Montaigne, Kipling, Emerson, Loti, Kant, Cervantes. These caught Hayden's eye as he took the chair Mademoiselle Mariposa indicated. There were roses, deep red roses in tall vases, and the breeze from the half-opened window blew their fragrance in delicious gusts about the room.

"'The rose-wind blowing from the South,'" quoted Hayden smilingly as he clasped the hand Ydo extended to him from the depths of her chair. Then, clapping his hand to his heart, he bowed exaggeratedly before her. "Señorita, I throw my heart at your

feet.'

"It never touched the ground, señor. I caught and am holding it for a ransom," she answered, with the same elaborate and formal courtesy.

He shrugged his shoulders disdainfully. "It is not worthy a ransom, señorita. I beg you, if you will pardon my presumption in offering so beggarly

a gift, to deign to keep it."

"Señor, you overwhelm me. It is I who am unworthy to receive so priceless a token, and only upon one condition can I do so, and that condition is, that you will in return accept mine."

They both laughed like children at play, and Hayden again threw himself in the easy chair and took one of the cigarettes Ydo pushed toward him.

"Well, gallant knight, who have

found Eldorado," she said, "I have a disappointment for you in store. One of the rightful heirs has suddenly been called away on business and will not be in town for ten days or so, but he will communicate with me immediately upon his return and I shall wave my wand, in other words, take down the telephone receiver and summon you to a conference."

"He!" Hayden felt a sharp sense of disappointment. Then, after all, Marcia was not the sole owner, even if she were one at all. He wondered impatiently why he clung so tenaciously to that idea. Her father had probably never bought the property, or if he had it had, no doubt, passed entirely out of

her hands.

"Señorita," he implored, "do tell me who these owners are; how many of them are there—something, at least, about them. It is only fair to me, do you not think so? What possible reasons are there for secrecy and mys-

tery?"

"He asks me, a professional fortuneteller, to discard secrecy and mystery!" cried the Mariposa. "Who ever heard the like? No. I have my own reasons for conducting this affair in my own particular and peculiar way, and, as far as I can see, señor, there is nothing for you to do but acquiesce. But listen! 'Tis the professional voice of Mademoiselle Mariposa which you hear now. Do not fear. You may set your house in order and do your wooing with an easy mind. It is all over. Poor brother of the road, you have found Eldorado and won Cinderella. Ah, the cruel gods!" She lifted her eyes to the ceiling.

"Won Cinderella!" He wondered sharply how much she knew, if anything, and decided she was probably speaking on the authority of recent rumor gleaned from Horace Penfield.

"You seem to imply that the gods are offering me nectar in a hemlock

She nodded several times, each nod becoming more emphatic.

"Ah, happy he who gains not The love some seem to gain." "Señorita," he protested politely, "your hyperbole is no doubt fraught with wisdom, but it is a wisdom beyond

my dense understanding."

"You've forgotten," she replied.
"Twas a lesson we learned 'when you were a tadpole and I was a fish.' It is a bit of wisdom that lies deep in our hearts; but we shrink from it and refuse to heed it, clinging blindly to our illusions."

"You always moralize so unpleasantly." He looked so desperate that she laughed her silver, ringing laughter that shook the rose-petals from their ca-

lyxes.

"Well, to change the subject, when you have Cinderella and Eldorado what are you going to do with them?"

"Enjoy life!"

"Child! The rashest of statements! Life resents nothing so much as taking her for granted. When she hears her mariners cry: 'Clear sailing now,' she invariably tosses them a storm. When they exclaim with relief: 'A quiet port,' she laughs in her sleeve and presents them with a quicksand. Now I will tell you something, prophesy without crystal, your palm or any astrological charts. See, I am always the fortune-teller. Listen." Her voice sank into deep, rich tones. "On your throne in Eldorado, with Cinderella beside you in her gold crown, there will come a day, an hour, when in the twinkling of an eye, all the shimmer, the shine, the purple and gold, and pomp and pride will grow dim before your eyes, and fade quite away, and you will see instead the long, brown path with the pines on either side marching up the hillside, on and on, up and up, and beyond them the snowy tips of the mountains, and you will hear the music that has never been written, the song of the road; all of its harmonies of the wind in the trees and the beat of the surf upon the shingle. It will haunt you until you will sicken for it; and at night, no matter how soft your bed and how silken your coverlids, you will toss and turn and dream of the hemlock boughs and the fern, the smell of the deep, deep woods!"

"Don't!" he cried sharply. "Stop it! It is too realistic, anyway. I can al-

ways go back."

"Oh, no, you cannot," she said.
"That will be quite impossible after you have lived in Eldorado for a while. You'll forget the way." She shook her head. "You'll never come back."

"Then I'm willing, glad and proud"—he lifted his head, his eyes shining—"to give it up for her, if she wants Eldorado. Tell me, Ydo," boldly, "have

you never loved?"

"Many times." Her eyes dreamed.
"Many times have I loved and unloved and forgotten. For that very reason I quote to you:

"Ah, happy he who gains not The love some seem to gain.

"Oh, what an opportunity my scorned profession gives me for knowing the human heart. This woman who comes to me cries: 'If I had only married I should have known the joy of companionship, of motherhood, and children growing up around me.' And this one wails: 'I have made a mistake. If I had not married and been condemned to a humdrum life what a noise I might have made in the world with my gifts and my beauty.' There is only one good, you know, the good we haven't got. They want a life of romance, of charm, and they never seem to think that it must be within them." struck the table lightly. "That life is only a reflection of one's self."

"And have you found your choice satisfactory?" he asked curiously.

She gave her quick little shrug. "I have lived after my own nature. It would have been impossible for me to do otherwise. Ah, life, life! There has never been a moment that good or bad, I have not loved it! It is a plant—life, a beautiful plant; and most people are in haste to cull its loveliest blossoms and strip it bare of leaves, in the effort to get all it can give, and finally, they even drag up the roots to see if they cannot extract something more; but to enjoy that plant, Mr. Hayden"—she spoke with passionate emphasis—"you must love and tend it.

'To get the most out of life' is a horrible phrase. Life offers nothing to those who seek her thus; but to all who ask little of her, who stand ready and glad to give, she repays an hundredfold."

"What a preacher you are," he

laughed.

Before Ydo could answer the maid entered with a card and handed it to her. The Mariposa sat silent for a moment or two, gazing intently at the bit of pasteboard, a peculiar smile on her lips.

"Show Mrs. Ames in here," she said

at last, with sudden decision.

"Mrs. Ames!" Hayden sat in dumb amazement. "Mrs. Ames!" What on earth could that old woman want with

the Mariposa?

But before he could voice his astonishment, the visitor appeared. She was in her customary rusty, fringed black, jingling with chains, mummified in expression, and with the usual large showing of dusty diamonds. She surveyed Hayden through her lorgnon with both surprise and disapproval, and then acknowledging his bow with a curt nod, turned to Ydo.

But a change had come over Mademoiselle Mariposa. She was no longer the dreaming gipsy, but a grande dame, a lady with some subtle, exotic touch of foreign distinction, who greeted the older woman with a charming and re-

served grace.

Mrs. Ames seated herself on the extreme edge of a stiff chair. "Mademoiselle Mariposa." Her thin voice rang authoritatively. "I had hoped to see you alone for a few moments of private conversation."

"Just so, madame," responded Ydo suavely, "but I have no secrets from Mr. Hayden. He is an old friend, an

adviser, I may call him."

"Humph!" Again the lorgnon was turned threateningly on Hayden. "Very well, since you have brought this on yourself, you may take the consequences. I will continue with what I have to say. Mademoiselle, I have had a recent and most distressing interview with my son. To put it frankly, I was reproaching him with his devotion to

a most ineligible young woman, and he, in a rage, informed me that he cared nothing for her, and proclaimed, openly proclaimed, his infatuation for you."

"Wilfred!" Ydo sat upright, her languid gaze brightening. "Really!"

"Wilfred?" the mother repeated, with

a rising inflection.

"Yes, Wilfred, you were speaking of him, were you not?" The Mariposa's green eyes sparkled with mirth. "Well, madame"—she spoke negligently—"what can I do for you? You know I do not receive any one professionally on Sunday."

"Would you regard it as professional if I ask you what you are going to do

about my son?'

"Not at all. I think it quite natural that you should wish to know. I can quite appreciate your state of mind, maternal anxiety, and all that. To have been in terror for fear your son would marry Marcia Oldham and then discover that he is really interested in me! It illuminates that passage in 'Paradise Lost,' does it not? It is sometimes considered obscure. You doubtless recall it. Something about 'and in the lowest depths a lower depth was found.'"

"You seem to have some appreciation of the situation," said the old woman

grimly.

"Believe me, I have. Only the mask smiles Comedy at me, and Tragedy at you. Madame, why do you cluck so over your one chicken?"

"The answer to that," Mrs. Ames tartly replied, "is first Miss Oldham

and then yourself."

"The declining scale! Fancy where he will end!" Ydo murmured.

"It may be a circus-rider yet," admitted his mother.

"I have been one," announced Ydo calmly, and Hayden could not tell whether she spoke truth or fiction. "Well"—there was a touch of impatience in her tones now—"what do you wish me to do?" She lifted a fan from her lap, and rapidly furled and unfurled it, a sure sign of irritation with her. "Find him a pretty doll with a blue sash and a wreath of daisies? You

must have urged many a one on him and see to what they have driven him."

"Wait," said the old lady, laying one bony, yellow hand stiff with rings, dusty diamonds in dim gold settings, on Ydo's arm. "Why do you take it for granted that I have come to you to do the tearful mother, imploring the wicked adventuress to give up her son? They do those things on the stage, and I've never regarded the stage as a mirror of life. I have heard more about you than you think, mademoiselle. Horace Penfield sits in my ingle-nook. Now, what I came to find out is what you want with Wilfred, if indeed you want him at all."

"You flatter me," said Ydo. "More, you interest me. Now just why do

you wish to know?"

"Are you going to marry him?" "It is evidently cards on the table Ydo had recovered her good with us." spirits. "Truly, I have not decided, You see, madame, your Wilfred is a big, good-natured fellow. He is like a faithful, loyal, devoted dog. You and I being cats need neither his assistance, advice nor sympathetic companionship. I can also say truly that his old name and his money are nothing to me. But he has something I want." She rested her cheek on her fan, a wistful note had crept into her voice, a shadow lay in her eyes. "Ah, madame, do you not understand that we, to whom all things come easily, are often very lonely? Life's spoiled and petted darlings, we are of necessity isolated. We live at high pressure, absorbed in our enthusiasms and interests, but there come moments of weariness when we would droop on the heart that really loves us, when we would rest in that maternal and protecting love which never criticizes, never judges or condemns, never sees the ravages of time or the waste of beauty, never puts upon us the crowning indignity of forgiveness—only loves. Loves, madame, as Wilfred loves me. 'Tis the rarest thing in all the world."

"And what would you give the poor dog in exchange for this?" Mrs. Ames' voice was dry to sarcasm. But Ydo was unmoved.

"My brains, madame, my knowledge of men, women and the world. My diplomacy, my power of attack. Wouldn't it be a fair exchange?"

Mrs. Ames clasped her stiff hands together and dropped the lorgnon on the floor. "By George!" she cried. "You're a man after my own heart. Look at me! I'm a withered, haggard old woman, fierce as a cat and ugly as sin. Why? Because all my life I've been baffled. I was born as wild as a bird, my dear, like yourself; but I never knew how to get out of the cage and I was always getting into new ones. lacked-what-d'-y'-m'-call-it?-initiative; and all this longing in me for freedom"-she clutched the dangling fringes on her breast-"and life and the choosing of my own path never had an outlet. It turned sour and curdled, and became malice and all uncharitable-

"Well, when I began to realize that Wilfred would probably give me a companion in the cage I got sick. I could bear the cage myself, I'd learned to do that; but I didn't want another shebird molting around. And then when it looked as if it would be Marcia Oldham I got sicker. It drove me wild to think of that milk-faced chit of a girl, with a fool of a mother that I've always despised! I tell you what you do, Miss Gipsy Fortune-teller!" She rapped the arm of Ydo's chair emphatically. "Marry Wilfred! Sure if you do," peering at her suspiciously, "that you won't elope with some one else?"

"I may," said Ydo coolly. "Only I have had the experience twice before, and it don't amuse me." Again, for the life of him, Hayden could not decide whether this were the embroidery of fiction or the truth. "The first man used scent on his handkerchief, and the second ate garlic with his fingers. I couldn't endure either of them for a week."

"You rake!" chuckled Wilfred's mother, clapping the Mariposa on the shoulder. "Marry Wilfred, do now! Make him President, at any rate a foreign ambassador." She rose. "You've given me fresh hope. I feel twenty years younger. Well, Mr. Heywood—Harden—whatever your name is, we've treated you as if you were a piece of furniture."

"Regard me instead as a wall," said Hayden pleasantly, "which has ears but no tongue. Won't you vouch for my discretion, Mademoiselle Mariposa?"

"As I would for the chairs and tables to which Mrs. Ames so amiably compares you," smiled Ydo.

When Hayden returned from putting the old lady in her carriage he showed all the elation of one who has scored heavily.

"Aha!" he cried. "Warning me one moment with serious argument against the inevitable ennui induced by settling in Eldorado and all the time preparing to build your own castles there!"

"But not for permanent residence," she protested, "and I assure you, I have not even decided whether or not to build there at all. My real frome is forever in Arcady. Do you think. seriously think, that there is anything in Eldorado which can hold me when I see the beechwoods growing green, and hear the fifes of June in my ears, and get a whiff of the wild-grape fragrance? Then I know that there's nothing for me but Arcady; and it's up and away in the wake of the cloverseeking bee. But you're a man, Bobby, who has-what is that awful phrase?oh, yes, 'accepted responsibilities,' and you'll stay there in Eldorado, bound by white arms and ropes of gold."

CHAPTER XII.

Kitty continued charmed with Hayden's idea of a butterfly dinner. It suited her volatile fancy. Her enthusiasm remained at high pitch, and she exerted herself to the utmost in behalf of her favorite cousin. As a consequence, although she made a pretense of consulting Hayden about the various arrangements, the final results were almost as much of a surprise to him as to the rest of the guests, and as he walked through his rooms at the last

moment he admitted to himself that Kitty really had surpassed herself.

Yellow and violet orchids fluttered everywhere, carrying out the butterfly effect; and while he stood admiring their airy and unsubstantial grace Kitty floated in followed by Hampton, thin and kindly with more of an expression of interest than he usually wore.

"Why, Kitty," cried Hayden, shaking hands with Hampton, "you look exactly like a butterfly, a lovely, little blue butterfly attracted here by the flowers."

"But that is what I am," Kitty an-"A blue swered him triumphantly. butterfly. Don't you see my long wingsleeves? And look at the blue butterflies in my hair! Oh," as Mrs. Habersham came in, "here is Bea. Isn't she gorgeous?"

Bea herself was the affirmative answer to that question. She was indeed gorgeous, a splendid brown butterfly with all kinds of iridescent effects gleaming through her gauzes. velvet outlined her skirt and floating sleeves, and dark antennæ stood upright

from the coils of her hair.

Marcia, who was with her, was a white butterfly, looking very lovely, but, as Hayden noticed with concern, paler than he had ever seen her, and with something like distress in her eyes, quite perceptible to him if unnoticed by the rest. He could not keep his solicitude out of his voice and glance, and this, he felt instinctively, annoyed, instead of gratifying her; for almost immediately she assumed a gaiety of manner foreign to her usual gentle and rather cool reserve.

His attention was distracted for the moment by the arrival of Edith Symmes, and the little group paid her the momentary attention of an awed silence, for she had perpetrated what was, perhaps, the greatest atrocity of her life-a vivid scarlet gown which made her face look a livid wedge.

"Don't you like this frock?" she whispered complacently to Bea Haber-

'No, you know it is a horror, Edith," that lady replied, with the bluntness of intimacy. "I think," turning and sur-

veying her friend calmly from head to foot, "that it is the very worst I have ever seen you wear, and that is saying a great deal. It makes you look like green cheese. For Heaven's sake, put some color on."

"Not I." Edith was quite unruffled. "You know perfectly well, Bea, that if I wore what you and Kitty and the rest of the world would call decent clothes, that every one would say: 'How plain poor Edith Symmes is! She dresses well, but that cannot make up for her lack of beauty.' But when I wear these perfectly dreadful, glaring things that I love, what is said of me? 'What a stylish, even a pretty woman, Edith Symmes might be, if she didn't wear such criminal clothes.' Don't vou see, you handsome idiot, that I please myself and score at the same time?"

Not being able to refute these plausible arguments, Bea contented herself with stubbornly maintaining her point. "But red, Edith, why red? It is a nightmare. Who ever heard of a scar-

let butterfly?"

Edith laughed lightly. "I invented one just for this occasion. Such a compliment to Mr. Hayden." Her serenity was not to be marred, and fortunately, before the discussion could go further, dinner was announced.

The dining-room Kitty had transformed into a tropical bower. From an irregular lattice of boughs across the ceiling orchids fell as if they had grown and bloomed there. These were interspersed with long trails of Spanish moss in which the lights were cunningly disposed. Orchids swayed, too, from the tops of the tall palms which lined the walls, and above the bright mass of the same flowers on the table floated on invisible wires the most vivid and beautiful tropical butterflies.

Hayden was an admirable host. Possessing the faculty of enjoyment himself, he succeeded in communicating it to his guests; and the dinner, as it progressed, was an undeniable success. Marcia, on his right hand, had apparently thrown off the oppression or worry from which she had suffered earlier in the evening, and her evident enjoyment was immensely reassuring to Hayden, for it seemed to him both nat-

ural and spontaneous.

"Bobby," said Kitty, a few moments before they left the table, "I'm really afraid after this that the rest of the even ing will be a dreadful let-down. I think if we showed the part of wisdom we'd all fly home as soon as we get up and keep intact a bright memory."

"Ah," said Hayden mysteriously, "you don't know what you would miss. The best of the evening is yet to come. I've got a whole bag full of tricks up

my sleeve.'

"I'm sure it's going to be a magiclantern, or perhaps stereopticon views illustrating his thrilling adventures in darkest Africa, or New York with himself well toward the center of the picture," laughed Edith Symmes.

"I wish it were," said Penfield. "By the way, Hayden, you're among friends. We'll all promise to keep your guilty secrets; but do be frank and open if you can, and tell us the romantic story of your discovery in South America, and how you happened to find something a lot of people had been searching for in

vain." Hay

Hayden looked at Horace in surprise. That he should have ventured on this subject was odd, and Robert was for the moment inclined to resent it. For the fraction of a second he hesitated; and then caught at the suggestion. He had been wondering how he should tei. Marcia that he was the discoverer of the lost and traditional mine on the estate of which, he continued to believe intuitively and unreasonably, without a scintilla of real evidence, that she was one of the owners. Yes, he had been wondering how he should tell her and here was the opportunity.

"Very well, I will," he said quickly. "It isn't stereopticon views, or a magic-lantern, Mrs. Symmes. It's worse. It's photographs, and I'm very well toward the center of the picture. With the best will in the world, now that I've got you all here, I sha'n't let you escape. You must listen to the story of my life."

He had sent for Tatsu, and now, at the immediate and noiseless appearance of the Japanese servant, Robert whispered a word or two to him and he left the room. Just as he did so Hayden felt a slight pressure on his arm. Turning, he met Marcia's eyes. Her gaze was fastened on him with a frightened, almost imploring expression and he saw that she had again grown very pale.

"What is it?" he said to her in a low voice. "You are not well, or you are unhappy about something. Do not feel it necessary to remain here if you would

rather go home.'

"Oh, no, no!" she protested vehemently. "I am quite well, and I would rather stay, only, I implore you, I beg of you, not to show any maps or photographs of that mine. I beg it." Her voice, her eyes besought him.

Tatsu returned at this moment with a package which he handed to Hayden, and the latter taking it from him looked carefully over its contents, allowing an expression of disappointment

to overcloud his face.

"The wrong bundle," he said mendaciously. "Too bad! And I might have to search an hour before laying my hands on the right one. I evidently wasn't intended to bore you with any of my ancient mariner tales this evening. This is distinctly an omen." He lifted his brows slightly and significantly to Kitty, and she who was playing hostess immediately rose.

Hayden carried the package into the drawing-room with him and laid it on a small table. He felt puzzled and perplexed. What did Marcia know, and what was worse, what did she fear? For there could be no doubt that she was badly frightened. How flat had fallen his happy plan of letting her know that he, by some joyous and romantic chance, was the discoverer of the long-lost Veiled Mariposa! But the party was far too small for any one member of it to engage in meditation, and Havden as host found his attention claimed every moment. calm review of this odd occurrence and any attempt to arrive at a satisfactory explanation of Marcia's words and action he saw clearly he would have to wait until the departure of his guests.

It was a real relief, a positive relaxation from strain, therefore, when Tatsu threw open the door and unctuously Mademoiselle announced Mariposa. There was the slightest rustle of skirts, the faint waft of an enchanting fragrance, and Ydo came forward. usual, her little mask concealed her face revealing only her sparkling eyes, and her mantilla of Spanish lace covered her hair; but she had discarded her customary black gown. She, too, was a butterfly, this evening, a glowing yellow one with deep lines of black and touches of orange and scarlet, a gown as vivid and daring as herself. As she advanced with her exquisite and undulating grace of carriage a little thrill ran through the group, for although they had moved in an atmosphere of color all evening, she seemed in some subtle and individual way to express deeper and more vital tints, and veiled, as she was, to cause even the lights to flicker and grow dim.

Behind her followed her private secretary, more demure and colorless than ever, bearing the various objects Mademoiselle Mariposa would need in the

exercise of her profession.

All of the women, in fact the whole party, greeted her with warm expressions of pleasure with the exception of Marcia who Hayden thought looked more distressed, even more alarmed than ever.

Ydo returned their pleasant speech with her accustomed ease, and then turning to Hayden, as if consulting him about the arrangements for her fortune-telling, said in a low tone:

"The man you wish to see has returned and I have arranged a meeting in my library to-morrow afternoon between you and the owners of the property. You will be there of course."

"Naturally." He smiled. Ah, the thing was to be really settled at last. He drew a long sigh of relief as the burden of this waiting and suspense fell from his shoulders. Hayden's experience since the discovery of The Veiled Mariposa had convinced him that anything, anything was better than uncertainty.

Meantime, Ydo, her Spanish accent more marked than usual if anything, had asked: "Which is it first? The palms, or the crystal, or what, señor?" addressing Hayden.

"Do not leave it to me," he answered.

"Ask the ladies."

The Mariposa turned inquiringly to the group of butterflies.

"Oh, the crystal," said Bea Habersham. "I'm sure mademoiselle couldn't find a new line on any of our hands."

"The crystal, Eunice."

Ydo spoke to the secretary over her shoulder, and that young woman silently and very deftly set to work. She cleared a small table, placed it in front of the Mariposa, and deposited upon it the cushion and the crystal, and finally, she threw some powder into a quaint bronze incense-brazier, and then seated herself at the piano.

"I will ask the rest of you to remain absolutely quiet," said Ydo. "Now,

Eunice, begin."

Eunice obediently struck a few strange chords, and then fell into a monotonous melody with a recurring refrain repeated again and again. The blue smoke from the incense-brazier curled lazily upward in long spirals and floated through the room, filling it with a pungent and heavy sweetness; the monotonous music went on, the strange rhythm recurring in an ever stronger beat. The Mariposa who had sat motionless gazing at the crystal began to speak.

"Ah, the vision is not clear to-night. I see nothing but clouds. Your figures appear for a moment and then disappear. Ah, here is Mr. Hayden standing on a mountain top with his hands

full of gold."

There was an explosion of laughter at this, and the Mariposa paused as if innocently surprised. "Clouds!" she gazed into the crystal again. "Ah, here is Mrs. Symmes. I see you in an immense studio, painting, painting all the time, canvas after canvas. You will in the future devote your life to art, madame. You will give up the world for it."

She paused and Edith, casting a tri-

umphant glance at Mrs. Habersham, admitted that she had been cherishing just such an ambition, looking only the more pleased at the unrestrained horror and surprise manifested by her friends.

"Miss Oldham, I see Miss Oldham now," continued Ydo. "She weeps. She is not happy. Idle tears!"

Hayden did not hear the rest, he looked about for Marcia, but she had vanished, slipped from the room. Strange, he had not seen her go, but then she had that peculiarly noiseless way of moving. While he pondered over it she slipped in again without sound, the faintest of rustles, nothing to attract the attention of the others, She was still as white as a snowdrop, but he thought her expression far calmer and less agitated.

"Mists! Mists!" murmured the Mariposa. "I see you, Mr. Ames. You stand alone and yet not alone, for out of the vapors a woman steps to meet you. I cannot see her distinctly, she is still obscured by clouds; but you, Mr. Ames, stand out clearly. Ah, yes.' Her voice deepened a little, and was it slightly shaken? "Yes, you will get

your heart's desire."

Ames stepped forward. He seemed entirely oblivious to the fact that there were other people present. His face was white, and upon it there was already an irradiation of joy. "Do you mean it?" he said in a low voice vibrating with some strong feeling. "Do you mean it?"

The little group looked at him in amazement. Was this white, eager man with the burning, intense eyes, the unruffled and imperturbable Wilfred, to whose placid silence they were so accus-

"Why, Wilfred!" exclaimed Edith "What on earth has come Symmes.

over you?"

But Ames paid not the least attention to her. It was as if he had not heard her voice. "Is it true?" he said again, his eyes fixed unwaveringly on the black mask of the Mariposa.

"Yes, señor," she almost whispered. "Yes, it is true. But in the future, mind you. I see only the future."

Before he could make another stap toward her she had risen quickly, at 1 with a gesture to her secretary announced that her reading was over for

the evening.

The moment for departure had come for all, and in the babble of adieus Hayden made an effort to get a moment's speech with Marcia alone, but in some feminine and elusive way she divined his intention and frustrated it, and in spite of the congratulations and encomiums of his guests he was left standing upon his lonely hearth with a desolate

feeling of baffled failure.

He could hardly say what was the matter. Everything had gone without a hitch. The dinner was perfect, the decorations were beautiful, the small group of congenial people had seemed to enjoy themselves immensely, and best of all, Ydo had brought him the wonderful news that his period of suspense and waiting was practically over. By this time to-morrow night he would know where he stood; and yet, reason about it as he would, the sense of elation and buoyant hope was gone, and in its stead was some dull, unhappy sense of foreboding, a premonition of impending disaster.

For him, at least, there had been some ghastly blight over the whole affair. Why, why, had Marcia appeared pale and distressed? And what was far more puzzling, why had she begged him not to show the photographs of the mine upon Penfield's request? Was it that she did not wish one of his guests to know too much about the matter? If so, which one? And how did she know anything about his connection with the mine, anyway?

He tossed and turned for hours trying to arrive at some half-way plausible or satisfactory solution; but none occurred to him, and he finally fell into

troubled sleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

As was natural after so restless a night, Hayden slept late the next morning, but when he awoke it was with his usual sense of buoyant optimism. The forebodings of the night had vanished, and the good, glad, fat years stretched before him in an unclouded vista. To-day in all probability marked the conclusion of his comparatively lean years. A half an hour of conversation with those mysterious "owners," the disclosure of his maps, photographs, ore samples, the report of the assayers, etc., and then, the final arrangements. It might result in a trip to the property; but a journey made, his high heart promised, with Marcia.

At the thought of her a slight cloud obscured the shining towers of his Spanish castles. He recalled with a pang her pallor, her agitation of the night before. Something had evidently lain heavily upon her mind; she had been greatly distressed, even alarmed; but with the confidence of a lover he saw himself a god of the machine, consoling, reassuring, dissipating grief, and causing smiles to take the place of tears.

Upheld by these pleasant reflections, breakfasted and then strolled through the rooms. They had been put in perfect order. And with the exception of the orchids, now sedately arranged in bowls and vases, instead of fluttering from palm-trees and lattices, there was no trace of the last night's festivities. Suddenly he bethought himself of getting together his photographs, etc., in readiness for the interview of the afternoon; but they were no longer on the small table between the drawingroom windows, where he had placed them the night before.

After seeking for them in every likely place for a few moments, Hayden rather impatiently summoned Tatsu and demanded to know what he had done with them. Tatsu, however, was a picture of the grieved ignorance he professed. He said that after every one had left the apartment, the night before, he had locked up very carefully and gone to bed; that he had arisen early in the morning, shortly after five, and had put the rooms in their present and complete order; and he was positive that there were no photographs upon the table then.

Hayden questioned him closely about

the extra servants taken on for the occasion; but he insisted that none of them had penetrated farther than the dining-room, and that he, himself had seen them all leave before the departure of the guests.

"There is a possibility that I may have tucked them away somewhere and have forgotten about them," said Hayden half-heartedly. "Come, Tatsu, let us get to work and make a systematic search for them. Don't overlook any possible nook or cranny into which they may inadvertently have been thrown."

The two of them, master and man, made a diligent and careful search, taking perhaps an hour, but not a trace of the lost package could they find; then, dazed, puzzled beyond words, unbelieving still but with a heavy sinking of the heart, Hayden sat down to face the situation, to make some attempt to review it calmly and to get matters clear in his own mind.

Their recent search eliminated himself from the situation; reluctantly he relinquished the hope that in an absentminded moment he had disposed of his precious bundle in some out-of-the-way No, he and Tatsu had sought too thoroughly for that to remain a possibility. Eliminating then himself, there remained Tatsu. Although perfectly convinced in his own mind of his valet's innocence, still, for the purposes of inquiry, he would presume him to be the thief. Of course nothing could have been easier than for him to purloin the photographs; but what reason would he have for doing so? The motive, where would be the motive? Would not the reasonable hypothesis be that the Japanese had been approached by some of the owners of the property, who either fearing or suspecting that he, Hayden, held visible proofs of the lost mine, had bribed his servant to gain the desired information? But admitting this to be the case, and Hayden did not believe it for a moment, why had Tatsu remained instead of departing as prudence would seem to dictate?

That of course could be explained by assuming that prudence dictated an-

other line of policy, that he deemed it the best way of averting suspicion. Perhaps! But the conclusion was not particularly satisfactory. Every lead Robert had followed seemed to bring him to a blind wall. He rose restlessly and walked up and down the room, and then sat down again drumming drearily on the arm of his chair. What now? What new line could he follow? By eliminating the servants, Tatsu, and himself, what remained? His guests. He felt a swift recoil at the bare suggestion, even although a mental and hidden one, of implicating them in this matter, and experienced a succeeding disgust and impulse to abandon his inquiry at once.

Yet, there were the facts, the ugly inexplicable facts staring him in the face, and he knew that it would be impossible for him to abandon the matter, mentally at least, until he had arrived at some sort of a satisfactory solution. His guests, he ran them over. In every instance, even if they were capable of such an act, the motive was lacking, save in one case. Steadily as the needle veers to the pole, his suspicions pointed to the Mariposa. There at least the motive

was not lacking.

Ah, he reflected, falling into deeper gloom, if she had them, then he was indeed lost. Even now, by this time, there would be a set of duplicate photographs made, and careful copies of his charts and maps. In some peculiar way he would probably find the photographs again on his table, and all further communication with him on the subject of The Veiled Mariposa would doubtless be declined by the owners of the property, their voice being Mademoiselle Mariposa. Within the shortest possible time, one of their prospectors on the property would discover the hidden trail, and the owners would begin immediate operations, and he as much out of all transactions as if he did not exist.

Suppose he put a detective on the case immediately; it was extremely likely that before the man could take any steps in the matter or decide on the line he meant to follow, the photographs

would again be in Hayden's posses-

No, he thought in bitter cynicism, he might as well await their return with what calmness he could muster, for he saw little or no use in taking any defi-

nite steps in the matter.

For a time he remained sunk in a listless dejection, sitting among the ashes of his hopes, his dreams of vast wealth gone, his shining Spanish castles in ruins about him. But again his dulled brain began to work. How did Ydo secure the photographs, if indeed it were she who had secured them? She had come late, laid aside her wraps in the dressing-room, and had entered the drawing-room followed by her secretary. From the moment of her first appearance he remembered practically every motion she had made. She had not moved about at all during her brief stay and had certainly not been anywhere near the table which had held the photographs, but had seated herself and gone through her tricks on the opposite side of the room.

Now as to the secretary. Well, she on her part had not moved from the piano-stool. He could see her, too, enter the room and leave it. The whole mental picture of the group was portrayed before him. As he distinctly remembered, the person who stood nearest the table while Mademoiselle Mariposa drew aside the veil of the future, was Edith Symmes, who sat almost directly before it. To the left of her was Marcia, pale and sad, and close beside her Horace Penfield. Heavens! He jumped impatiently to his feet. · He was simply getting into a morbid muddle sitting here brooding over this matter. He must have action, action of some kind, and obeying a sudden impulse, he decided to go and see Ydo at

once

Wasting no time in reflection, he telephoned to her apartment, and impressed upon the surprised and reluctant maid that no matter who was there, or what the appointments for the day might be, he must see her mistress within the half-hour on business of the most imperative nature.

His rapid and excited speech must have impressed the young woman with the urgency of the case, for she presently returned to the telephone with the message that if he would call within the next twenty minutes Mademoiselle

Mariposa would see him.

It is needless to say that Havden lost no time in getting to the Mariposa's apartment-house, but reached it as fast as a chauffeur could be induced to make the run thither, and was, after a very brief delay, admitted to Ydo's library. She was sitting there alone, looking over a newspaper, and as he came through the door she sprang up smilingly and expectantly to meet him. Then at the sight of his pale and harassed face she recoiled in evident and unsimulated surprise.

"Why, what is the matter?" she "You have aged a thousand cried.

years."

"Matter enough!" he exclaimed. "The photographs and maps of The Veiled Mariposa are all, all gone. They have been taken." He shot the words at her as from a rapid-fire gun, watching keenly from narrowed and scornful

eyes the effect upon her.

Her very lips grew white. "Impossible!" she gasped. "Impossible!" Her surprise was as genuine as the slow, sickly pallor which had overspread her He could not doubt her. premely clever woman as she was, she was incapable of this kind of acting. He gave a quick sob, almost a sob of relief. If not against him she would be for him and her assistance would be invaluable, especially since their interests were pooled.

"Then you," he stammered involun-

tarily, "you know nothing about it."
"I!" Her eyes glittered in quick anger. "Of what are you thinking? Oh, I see." She was laughing now. "Oh, I see." She was laughing now. no, no, no! Dear me, no! That would not suit my game at all. If you knew the circumstances and, if I may venture to suggest it, myself better you would never have dreamed of such a thing. But," frowning now, "when and how were they taken? Begin at the beginning and tell me all about it."

"There is nothing much to tell," he said. "I sent for the photographs while still at the dinner-table intending to tell my guests the story of the mine, butbut-" He stammered a little. changed my mind. When we left the table I carried them with me, and placed them on the small table between the drawing-room windows.

"And left them there?" she asked

quickly.

'Yes, after laying them on the table I dismissed them from my mind, had no further remembrance of them until this morning. Then I went to get them and found them gone. My first idea was that having the appointment with you for this afternoon so on my mind I had probably gotten up in the night and hidden the package somewhere, either when asleep or in a state of halfwakefulness; but Tatsu and I made a most thorough search of the entire apartment, overlooking no possible receptacle where I might have hidden them; but there is absolutely no trace of them."

The servants," she said rapidly.

"I was coming to them. They were all taken on for the dinner, with the exception of Tatsu, who has been with me for years, and whom, I think, that I would trust farther than I would myself. When I questioned him he was extremely clear and quick in his answers. His story is that the extra servants all departed before my guests did, and that he personally saw them each one leave and locked the door after them. Then, after the guests had gone he locked up the other rooms very carefully and went to bed. This morning he got up early and put the whole apartment in order; and he is positive, and when Tatsu is positive he is not apt to be mistaken, that neither the photographs nor the maps were on that table, nor indeed anywhere in the rooms at five o'clock in the morning.'

The Mariposa listened attentively to what he had to say, and then thought

deeply for a few moments.

"There are only two possible explanations of the whole affair, which are in the least plausible," she said at last. "One is that some interested person or persons have heard of your find. It might be some prospector who has been tracking you for weeks, and he, or they may have stolen the papers with a view of communicating with the owners, whom they may know and whom they may fancy that you have not discovered. Your valet may or may not be a tool, that remains to be discovered. Well," resolutely, "in that case there is nothing to fear, I can assure you of

"The other hypothesis is that one of the guests had a motive for removing those especial maps and photographs, thus securing possession of them. But who and why?" As she pondered this question an expression of most startled and amused surprise swept over her face, and then she burst out laughing. "How funny!" she cried. "How awfully funny!" The peals of her silver laughter rang through the room.

"What is so awfully funny?" in-quired Hayden politely, but with an irritation he could not conceal. "I assure you, it does not seem funny to

me.

Ydo had evidently recovered her spirits; the sparkle had come back to her eves, the color to her cheeks. "Don't bother any more," she counseled "It's all going to turn out blithely.

right now. You see.

"I should prefer to know how." Hayden's irritation was increasing instead of diminishing, and he spoke more stiffly than before. "As it is a matter which concerns me primarily and which has caused me much worry I think it only fair that you should share with me the knowledge which seems to justify you in drawing such happy conclusions."

Havden would never again be nearer losing his temper completely than at this moment, for Ydo, after gazing at him for a moment with a sort of whimsical, mock seriousness, again broke into laughter. "Who would ever have dreamed of her doing such a thing?" she apostrophized the ceiling.

"Her!" Hayden felt as if his heart had stopped beating for a moment and then begun again with slow and suffocating throbs. Perhaps Ydo saw or guessed something of his emotion, for she again repeated reassuringly: "It will be all right now within a few

hours. You see.'

"It's going to be dropped," he said in a dull, toneless voice. "It's my affair, Mademoiselle Mariposa, and you are not going to make the least move in the matter. Your suspicions-whichever one of my guests they affect, and I cannot even surmise which one you are trying to implicate—are quite beside the mark. This is entirely my own affair, and I tell you, we are going to drop it. Do you hear?"

Ydo leaned forward, her chin upon her hand, and surveyed him with a humorous, unabashed and admiring scru-"Brother in kind if not in kin, little brother of the wild, you are great. But do you mean what you say? Are you really willing to run the chance of giving up a fortune to protect-

"Nonsense!" he broke in roughly. "Don't go any further. There's no use in talking over things." He again sank

into somber silence.

But Ydo was apparently unmoved. "There is one thing I meant to ask you this afternoon," she said, "but since I shall probably not have an opportunity to do so I want my curiosity appeased. Why is that mine called The Veiled Mariposa? Did you happen to find out?'

"Yes," he answered, still entirely without interest. "Because, as the maps and photographs show, the only way to reach it is by a little hidden trail just back of a waterfall. You would never suspect it. I happened upon it by the merest chance, followed it, and discovered that the mine lay behind this mountain cascade.'

"Ah, beautiful!" Ydo clapped her hands. "I remember, I am sure, the very cascade. Although perhaps not, there were many.'

"You have been on the ground then?" he asked.

"Ah yes, with prospectors. But," with a shrug of the shoulders, "we were not so lucky as you."

"The interview for the afternoon is of course off," he said, rising heavily and stretching out his hand for his hat.

"I suppose so," conceded Ydo. She smiled and sighed. "The pretty little coup I had planned is smashed," she said. "The gods have decreed it differently and have taken the matter into their own hands. Ah, well! But I shall hear again from you to-day; and you will hear from me."

CHAPTER XIV.

Hayden had left Ydo's apartment half sick. He felt a curious stifling sensation, a longing for air and motion, and so strong was this feeling that he decided to dismiss the motor and walk home. This decision proved a wise one, for by the time he had reached his own door his nerves were steadied and his poise somewhat restored. He felt sore and bruised in spirit, however, and desired nothing so much as to sit by himself for a time and think out, if possible, some satisfactory arrangement of this tormenting matter. But, as he threw open the door of his library with a sensation of relief at the prospect of a period of unbroken solitude, he stopped short, barely repressing the strong language which rose involuntarily to his lips.

In spite of the fact that spring had at last made her cov and reluctant début, there had been a sharp change in the weather and winter again held the center of the stage. Regardful of this fact. Tatsu had built a roaring fire in the library to cheer Hayden's homecoming. The flames crackled up the chimney and cast ruddy reflections on the furniture and walls; last night's orchids seemed to lean from their vases toward this delightful and tropical warmth, and there, with a chair drawn up as near the hearth as comfort permitted, was Horace Penfield, long, lean, cold-blooded, enjoying the permeating glow and radiance.

He turned his head lazily when Hayden opened the door, and Robert in his indignation felt a faint chill of apprehension as he met that glance. Penfield's eyes had lost their usual saurian impassiveness. They were almost alive, with that expression of interest which only the lapses and moral divagations of others could arouse in them.

"Hello!" he said, indifferent to the fact that Hayden still stood frowning in the doorway. "I've been waiting about half an hour for you."

about half an hour for you."
"Anything especial?" asked Robert coldly, walking over and standing by the mantelpiece, his moody gaze on the burning logs.

Penfield chuckled. "Oh, I don't know." There was an unconcealed triumph in his tones; but he had no intention of being hasty, he meant to extract the last drop of epicurean pleasure that was possible in this situation. Penfield was not lacking in dramatic sense, and he had no intention of losing any fine points in the narration of his news by careless and slovenly methods of relation.

"No," he continued, "nothing particular; but I've lately run across one or two things which I fancied might be of interest to you. By the way," with the effect of branching off on a side issue, "of course you know that Ames is crazy about the Mariposa?"

"I know nothing of Ames' private affairs," returned Hayden shortly. "How should I?"

"You might have judged that from the way he behaved last night." Penfield again indulged in a series of unpleasant chuckles. "His mother! Lord! There'll be the deuce to pay there! Look at the way she's been behaving over his attentions to Marcia Oldham, and then just fancy how she'll take this! I wouldn't miss seeing the fun for a farm-no, not for all those lost mines of yours. I think that I shall drop in for a cup of tea with the old lady this afternoon, and murmur a few condolences in her ear, and then watch her fly to bits." He rolled about in his chair in paroxysms of silent mirth. "But," sobering, "it's too bad to think of missing the interview between the Mariposa and herself. I really do not know which one I would put my money on." He considered this a moment. "But that isn't the only interesting thing I've gleaned in the day's work. He glanced keenly at Robert through his white lashes, and again the triumph vibrated in his thin voice. do you know I've discovered the owner of your lost mine?"

Robert sat silent a moment, motionless, apparently thinking; his face at least betrayed nothing. "The owners,"

he corrected.

"No, I don't mean owners at all," returned Penfield coolly, "I mean just what I said—the owner. Ah," the most unctuous satisfaction in his voice, "for all your non-committal manner I don't believe you know as much as I do."

"Perhaps that's true," said Hayden "Whom do you mean by the sharply.

owner?"

"Why, the elderly gray-haired man with whom Marcia Oldham is seen more or less," affirmed Horace, self-gratulations in his tone. What if his field was petty? He did not consider it so, and his feats were great.

Hayden dropped the hand with which he had been shielding his eyes and stared at the gossip on the other side "What on earth are you of the hearth.

talking about?" he demanded.

"I'm giving you facts, straight facts, dear boy," replied Horace, his pale eyes shining through his white lashes.

"But-but-

"Oh, there's no 'but-but' about it." Horace was consummately assured. "That man is the owner of your lost mine, so go ahead and dicker with him. I know. You can take my word for it."

"Is this a fact, Penfield?" asked Robert gravely. Horace had at least suc-

ceeded in impressing him.

"True as I'm sitting here. There's absolutely no doubt about it. Yes, I've got down to the secret of that old lost and found mine of yours." He chuckled at his wit. "But," his complacency increasing to the point of exultation, "that isn't all I know, by any means. All winter long I've been bothering my head about those butterflies the women are wearing, and now, at last, I've got a line on them."

His voice sounded curiously far away to Hayden and he did not at once take in the meaning of the words. His head was whirling. So, that middle-aged, gray-haired man was really the owner of the mine, and it was for him that Marcia— No, he would not think it. He would not let those torturing doubts invade his mind. With every force of his nature he would resist them and bar them out.

"Yes," Penfield was gloating, "I'm

onto the butterflies, at last."

"Why should you imagine that they have any especial significance?" Hayden's voice sounded faint and dull in

his ears.

"Because I have a nose for news, Hayden. I was born with it. I feel news in the air. I scent it and I'm rarely mistaken. I said to myself last November, those butterflies mean something, and I mean to get to the bottom of them. And where do you think they led me? Oh, you will be interested in this, Hayden," smiling. "They led me right to the root of Marcia Oldham's secret.'

Hayden threw up his head, a flash of anger on his spiritless face. "You can't discuss Miss Oldham here. Pen-

"Oh, easy now," returned Horace cynically. "It's nothing to her discredit, far from it. You remember the night you suggested that she might live by the sale of her pictures, and I scoffed at you and said that all the pretty little pictures she could paint in a year wouldn't keep her in gowns? Well, you were nearer right than I for once.

A light came into Hayden's face. He opened his mouth as if about to speak. "Now, just wait," Horace admonished him. "The reason your suggestion struck me as ridiculous was this: One must have a reputation to make a decent living as an artist, and who ever heard of the Oldham pictures? Where were they on exhibition? Who bought them? Nothing in it, you see." He moved his hand with a gesture of finality. "But," impressively, "Marcia Oldham can paint just the same, and beautifully; but that is not all she can

do. It appears that as a child she very early showed a marked artistic talent. Her mother always disliked it; but her father encouraged it in every way; but she developed a rather-peculiar bent, and in the years that she spent abroad she devoted herself to the designing and making of jewelry and objets d'art. Her especial fad, you know, were those exquisite translucent enamels, just like her butterflies.

"Well, when her father died, and

"Well, when her father died, and the crash came, Marcia, who was already ranked as a professional among people who know about those things, decided to go into it as a business and support her mother and herself.

in But that is where the old lady comes in. Obstinate as a mule, weak as water, with a lot of silly, old-fashioned pride, she absolutely balked, had hysterics, took to her bed, did all the possible and impossible things that women do under such circumstances, with the result that Marcia was at her wit's end. Finally, the mother capitulated to a certain point. Marcia might go ahead and pursue her avocation in peace under one condition; that it should be a dead secret, that not a whisper of it should reach the world.

"At first, Marcia rebelled at this decision; but one of the friends in her confidence, probably Kitty Hampton, who has considerable executive ability, persuaded her that it held certain advantages. For instance, she was a noticeable figure, not only on account of her beauty, but also because of her style and her positive genius for dress. Now, Kitty held—and as events have proved, correctly—that Marcia, by keeping the business end of it dark, could by appearing as a devotee of social life advertise her wares as she could no other way, especially when aided and seconded by Mrs. Habersham and Mrs. Hampton.

"But neither of those two women is financially interested with her. That being the case, who backs the business? I am inclined to think"—Horace spoke thoughtfully and yet with sufficient assurance—"that that person is identical with the man who is the owner of the

lost Mariposa. By the way, you did not ask his name. It is Carrothers."

"Carrothers! Carrothers! Why that was Ydo's name. Ydo Carrothers." Hayden huddled down into his chair. He could not think. His brain, his dazed and miserable brain had received too many impressions. They had crowded upon him and he could not take them in. Penfield was talking, talking straight ahead, but although Robert heard the words, they conveyed no meaning to him. Then from the maze of them, Marcia's name stood out clearly. Horace was speaking of her again.

"Hayden, are you asleep? I've just asked you why Marcia Oldham was so surreptitiously carrying off that package from the little table in the drawing-room last night. She wrapped it up in her gauze scarf and carried it off as stealthily as a conspirator in a melodrama."

Hayden threw off his lethargy with a supreme effort. "Did she?" in a tired and rather indifferent voice. "I dare say she was afraid of disturbing the others. I asked her to take them home with her and look them over."

"Oh!" Penfield's voice was a little disappointed but not suspicious. He rose. There was no use in wasting any more time on a man who took news, real news, so indifferently as Hayden. He thought with a smile of various drawing-rooms where his bits of information would create a sensation. Then why should he who could take the stage as the man of the hour, the most eagerly listened to person in town, longer deny himself that pleasure?

"Good-by, Hayden," he said hastily, nor waited to hear if he were answered.

CHAPTER XV.

Hayden's feeling of intense relief at Penfield's departure was succeeded by an almost numb dejection. The revelations of Horace in regard to Marcia and the photographs had, to his own horror, occasioned no surprise in him, and the rest of Penfield's news had sunk into insignificance beside this confirmation of his suspicions which lay like lead on his heart and which he had refused to confess even to himself. He seemed to have known it all the time, to have known it from the moment the photographs had disappeared. He had no feeling of anger toward her, no blame for her, it went too deep for that.

It was a gray afternoon, and as it wore on toward evening now and again a flurry of snow blew whitely from the sullen skies, and the leaping flame of the fire which had put to rout any lurking shadows was now in turn defied

by them.

"A lady to see you, sir." Tatsu stood at Hayden's elbow.

"A lady to see me? Here?" Hayden roused from his apathy to exclaim.

"Yes, sir."

But before he could make further explanation, or Hayden could give orders either to ask the lady to enter or to beg that she excuse him, there was a soft, hesitant footfall, the delicate feminine rustle of trailing skirts, the faint, delicious fragrance of violets, and he sprang to his feet, his heart pounding. In some mysterious uncannily skilful manner, Tatsu vanished.

Marcia was very white, her long, dark gown fell about her, her face gleamed pale as a lily, wistful as regret, from the shadow of her large black hat.

"Mr. Hayden, Bobby." She made a step toward him. "Why, how tired you look! You are ill!" she broke off to cry, deep notes of tenderness and solicitude in her voice.

"I am a little tired," he said, with an effort. "But you, too, look pale. Do not stand. Come near the fire. Lay aside your furs. I will have some hot

tea brought."

She allowed him to lead her to a chair, her eyes fixed still upon his face. "Something has worried you, is bothering you still. "Isn't it so:"

He dismissed the question. "You must believe me," he said, "when I assure you that I am quite well, and that everything is all right."

She was still standing, and now she turned to him and laid her hand upon his sleeve. There was an intensity, almost a wildness in her expression. "Ah," she cried, "you have missed the photographs. I was afraid of that, but I couldn't get here sooner. I telephoned twice, but I could not reach you. Bobby"—she burst into tears and clung to his arm—"it was I—I who stole your papers and photographs."

"My dear," bending above her, "do not say such things." His voice trembled. "If you borrowed my photographs you did it for some good reason, for cause which seemed right and proper to you. That is enough for me."

"Oh, Bobby, Bobby!" She was weeping now, her whole figure shaken with sobs. "Your goodness, your sweetness overwhelms me. It is more than I can bear. But, Bobby, you mustn't believe the worst things of me. I didn't take them from the motives you may attribute to me."

"Dear Marcia," he said soothingly, "do not talk of motives. Whatever your motives were, they were right. But you are going to tell me no more now. You are going to sit down here and have a cup of tea, and rest quietly a few moments before you attempt to tell me anything more. Here, you must lay aside those heavy wraps."

He took her furs, he begged her to remove her hat, then occupied himself for a moment in fussing over the fire and giving orders for hot tea, and was rewarded presently by seeing that the color had returned to her lips and cheeks, and that the frightened, strained expression had faded from her eyes.

"There," he said, after Tatsu had brought in the tea things, and he had poured some for her. "Two lumps of sugar, one slice of lemon. You see I

remember your tastes."

She smiled gratefully at him. "Please, may I tell you all about it

now?" she asked.

His face fell again into the lines of dejection. In spite of the cheerfulness he had forced himself to assume, and in spite of the compassion he felt for her weakness, he would have postponed forever this confession which must condemn her.

"Why." he asked, "why not bury the

incident in a wise oblivion, and never mention it again? Indeed, indeed, it is better so. One of the best mottos in the world is, 'Never explain.'"

His lips smiled, but his eyes pleaded, and his heart passionately protested:

Must we lose our Eden, Eve and I?

Her languor and weariness disappeared in a moment; she drew herself up now, the pose of her head haughty, her eyes chill. "Never explain?" she repeated. "It is, as you say, an excellent motto—for those who are best assisted by a wise silence. But I assure you I am not trying to gain your pity, or tolerance or forgiveness. I took your photographs and maps yesterday evening and acted probably on incorrect reasoning and mistaken impulses, but I should do exactly the same thing again under the same circumstances; and now, I insist upon your listening to those circumstances."

.She laid aside her cup and with the scarlet still glowing on her cheek be-

gan:

"Yesterday morning I received word from Mr. Carrothers that a man who had all the charts and photographs of The Veiled Mariposa had been discovered, and that that man was you. You may imagine my sensations. At first, I could not grasp it, it seemed too inconceivable and incredible to be true, and then, as the facts of the case were given me and I was able to realize it. to take it in, why-I was overcome with joy. Ah, B-Mr. Hayden, no one was ever so happy as I vesterday morning. Your words of a week ago, the afternoon that we had walked in the Park, came back to me. Your mysterious allusions to the good fortune which was almost within your grasp—and this was it! And to think that I—I should be one of the owners of the property! Why, it was like a fairy-story.

"And are you really one of the owners?" he interrupted her to cry.

"Indeed, yes. But let me go on. I was also told that your information would be in our hands within twenty-four hours, and then, I learned that

Ydo was conducting the negotiations. That was the rift within the lute. I immediately became frightened. I did not know what it meant. What I did know was, that Ydo stops at nothing to gain her ends. And of course, she, being interested, too——"

"How is she interested?" he interrupted again. "I have not yet discov-

ered that."

"I will explain later. I want to go on with this part of my story now. But, as I say, knowing Ydo, her daring, her indifference to anything but her own game, her powers of resource—"

"Oh, come, you are unjust to her," he exclaimed, forgetful of his own base

suspicions.

"You are a man"—she smiled in faint cynicism-"and Ydo-is-Ydo. Believe me, I am not"-again her head was haughtily lifted-"I am not trying to gain your sympathy by criticizing her; I am merely trying to make you understand the case as it appeared to me. As I say, I was frightened. It was doubtless all my own superstitions. Indeed, I know that it was; but I got in a panic, and could not reason clearly. No," as he strove to take her hand, "please wait. And then, last night when Horace Penfield asked you to show the photographs I saw a confirmation of my fears, and when Ydo entered I was still more frightened. I suspected an arrangement, a plot between them. There were the photographs and maps on that little table where you had carelessly thrown them; any one could take them; and then when Ydo was going through her nonsense over that glass ball and had every one's attention fixed on her Horace crept around and stood so near the table that I was sure that he was going to seize them, so I took them myself. I twisted the gauze scarf which was about my neck around them and carried them out that way. one noticed. And here they are." lifted the package from her muff, still wrapped in the scarf, and held it out to him. "No one has even glanced at them; not even myself."

"And you did this to save me! Oh,

Marcia, Marcia!" He was more moved than he could express.

"Wait!" She lifted her hand imperatively. "I haven't finished. There are lots of things to tell you vet."

"Postpone them!" he cried ardently. "Forget them until to-morrow! Ah. dearest, you are tired. You have borne too much strain already."

"No, no!" she cried. "It grows late, and I must, must tell you these things before I leave you."

"Leave me!" he cried. "Try it.

When you go I go with you."
They both laughed. "But listen, Bobby," she pleaded; and at that "Bobby" his heart glowed, he was surely forgiven. "Don't you want to know how I happened to be the largest owner of the vast Mariposa estate?

"Oh, indeed I do!" he said. "Are

you the largest owner?"
"Yes," she nodded. "You see, at the height of his prosperity, my father bought it from a Mr. Willoughby, whose wife inherited it. No one knew it, but even at that time my father's mind was affected, and before long his disease, a softening of the brain, had fully manifested itself. His greatest interest in life had always been business, and after this change came upon him he got all kinds of strange ideas in his head, among them a perfect mania for destroying papers. It is principally for that reason," with a slight shrug of her shoulders, "that we were left almost penniless. But he had a head clerk, a Mr. Carrothers, Ydo's father, by the way, who saw how things were going, and who, by various ruses, succeeded in saving some of the papers, among them those relating to the Mariposa estate. These were intact.

"After my father's death, as you have probably heard, there was practically nothing left, nothing for my mother and myself to live on. So I decided to go into business. I am," with a little smile, "both a designer and manufacturer of quaint jewelry, ornaments and things; but there wasn't any money. But Mr. Carrothers, who had more or less, was crazy about the Mariposa property. He had looked up the history of the Willoughbys and found that everything that Mr. Willoughby claimed was true, and he wanted an interest in the estate, so he offered to finance my little venture if I would give him a third interest in the prop-

"I was glad enough to do so, and he and I went into partnership. It has been a success. We have made money, but it left little time for anything else. Nevertheless, Mr. Carrothers has never lost his enthusiasm in regard to The Veiled Mariposa, and that has kept up my flagging interest. We have not been idle about it either; but have kept prospectors down there almost all the time. Ydo went over the ground two or three years ago. But this year, we had decided to make a special effort. were to send down some great expert and a seasoned old prospector or two who could positively smell ore on the rocks.

"I sent out my little messages in the shape of the jeweled butterflies, and Ydo, who had not been in this country for several years, decided to tell fortunes, under the name of The Veiled Mariposa, and to carry out the idea in her disguise. It was a clever idea because she could advertise, and any one who had anything to communicate about the mine would naturally connect her with it and seek her out. And sure enough, this has proved our lucky year, for you, you discovered it-The Veiled Mariposa." She smiled happily at him.

"To lay it at your feet." He caught her hands and drew her up from her "Ah, Queen of Eldorado, will you take it with my poor heart?"

They were both laughing; but it was laughter that trembled on the verge of tears. "Sweetheart," she murmured, her arms about his neck, her face hidden on his shoulder, "my mine, my butterflies and my heart are yours for-

"Ah!" He held her so closely that the violets, crushed upon her breast, protested in wafts of fragrance.

"There are more things I want to tell

you," she murmured.

"You will do nothing of the kind, O Scheherazade! Not, at least, until you have had something to eat. Ah, we will go to the Gildersleeve, where we first met, or at least first talked. Come, your hat and wraps, no delay." He assisted her into her long cloak,

and laid her furs about her shoulders.

"How can I pin on my hat," she asked desperately, "when you——"
"Yes? When I?" he said encoura-"Yes? When I?" he said enc gingly. "Why are you blushing?"

"Nobody can properly pin on a hat when some one is kissing her," she pro-

tested.

"I am from Missouri," he replied. "You must show me. In other words, I doubt the assertion. Now, to prove it, you try to pin on your hat and I will endeavor to kiss you at the same time."

"You will do nothing of the kind," she insisted. "You will go and stand on the other side of the room. Ah-

There was no room for further argument, the door was thrown open and Ydo, brilliant, laughing, gorgeous as a tropical flower, entered. Behind her loomed Wilfred Ames with all the radiance it was possible for his stolidity to express.

'Here!" cried Ydo, the music of her laughter filling the room as her eyes fell on Marcia. "Ah, I knew it! What fell on Marcia. did I tell you?" turning to Hayden.

"What do you mean?" cried Marcia,

startled, flushing.
"I mean this," laughed Ydo. "That he," pointing to Hayden, "came to me about noon, frantic over the disappearance of his claims on Eldorado. After he had explained the circumstances to me I knew in a minute that thou wert the woman. I didn't have to gaze into my crystal or run the cards to see that. But why, why? I knew that you didn't take them for-well, reasons that others might have taken them for; but why take them at all?"

There was no gainsaying Ydo. "Because I thought some one else would take them if I didn't," faltered Marcia. "Meaning me!" Ydo's laughter

seemed merciless to Marcia's shrinking ears. "I don't mind the implication. But Wilfred, Bobby, to fancy I would do anything so clumsy! Who says that women are not cruel to women?"

"Ydo, forgive me," pleaded Marcia, "I am humiliated, ashamed." Her voice

trembled.

Ydo's green eyes twinkled upon her. "Oh, la! la!" with a friendly, careless little push. "Sweet, dainty lady of the butterflies, I have nothing to forgive. I comprehend you, and he who under-stands all forgives all. It is simply that you do not understand me. Shall the violet understand the orchid? It is not a thing to think of again, so forget it forever.

"And speaking of orchids, Mr. Hayden, may I have a few to wear to-night from that vase yonder? They will just

suit my gown.

She moved with him across the room, leaving Marcia and Ames standing together: but she did not stretch out her hand to take the orchids he offered, but stood looking at him with her dazzling smile, sweetened, softened with some touch of feeling so deep and yet so evanescent that he could not fathom it.

"Little brother of the wilds, now that you have won Cinderella and Eldorado. as I predicted, I wish you a divine unrest. It is the best I can hope for you. Eldorado and domesticity mean the fishy eye, the heavy jowl, and the expanded waistcoat; and remember that although the red gods may be silent so long that you will forget them, yet there will come a day when they will call and you will hear nothing else. Then, as you would keep your happiness, get up and follow-follow 'to the camp of known desire and proved delight.'

"Advice from one about to settle down-don't settle." He strove to

speak lightly, but failed.

"I, settle! Don't harbor any such vagaries. We may meet again, oh, I don't mean in this sort of a way, I mean where the open road winds on like a great river, and the pines go marching up and down hill, and the blue smoke of the tent-fires curls up to the morning skies. We may meet again, Bobby, on the outward trail that leads from Eldorado to Arcady."





leaned over the white paling of the enclosure and gazed moodily after the retreating players.

"I can't think why I came to this beastly place!" he muttered. "Nor I!" the girl

answered indifferently.

"I shall leave to-morrow," he de-

"The best train is in the afternoon," she reminded him. "You would have

plenty of time to pack."

"She must have remembered it perfectly well," he continued, following out his own train of thought. "I saw her coming down to breakfast, and she said that she might be a few minutes late. Here am I on the spot to the moment, and there she is at the second hole, playing with that fellow Cunningham!"

The girl who had been standing by his side shrugged her shoulders as she

turned away.

"Why don't you go in and see the colonel?" she suggested. "He'll find

you a match."

He opened his mouth to say things, but remembered in time that the girl was within ear-shot. As she strolled up to the first tee he watched her critically. She really was not bad looking. Her figure was excellent, and although her features were undistinguished, and her small oval face was pale, her eyes were good, and her deep brown hair was a pleasant color. Of course, by the side of Stella Manners she was insignificant, so far as looks went, at any rate, but she at least presented a possi-

"I suppose you wouldn't care to have a round with me?" he suggested, strolling after her.

She turned round and faced him, with a humorous twinkle in her eyes.

"How good-natured of you!" she exclaimed, "I should be delighted, if you are quite sure that it won't bore you."

"Not in the least," he assured her. "Let me see, my handicap is ten. What shall I give you? Half a stroke?"

"I don't think that I must be quite so greedy," she answered. "Let us try

a round level."

He raised his evebrows. He had

never seen her play.
"Just as you like." he assented, a little stiffly. "I thought that it would make the game more interesting if I gave you some strokes.'

She smiled, and drove off. At the turn he was two down. He lost the

match three down.

"I'm awfully sorry I offered you those strokes," he said, laughing, as they walked up to the pavilion. "You might have told me that you were a scratch player.

"You never asked me my handicap," she reminded him. "Besides, these links are all in my favor. On a long course I shouldn't have a chance

against you."

Stella came out of the enclosure to meet them.

"You were late this morning, Mr.

Lugard," she remarked.

"I was here punctually at the time we arranged," he answered stiffly.

"Really! Then my watch must have gained in the night," she declared carelessly. "So sorry! I suppose you two wouldn't care to play a foursome against Captain Cunningham and myself this afternoon, would you?"

Lugard was on the point of refusing, when an evil thought struck him.

"I should be delighted," he said, "if Miss Leycester would play."

Miss Leycester agreed, after a moment's hesitation,

"We aren't very much good, you know," Lugard remarked modestly, "at least I'm not."

"We can give you strokes," Stella declared magnanimously. "Captain Cunningham is playing a wonderful

game!"

The foursome should have taught him wisdom, but it didn't. The lady of his ill-advised adoration, accustomed to supremacy, was outdriven and outplayed by the quiet little brown girl whom no one knew anything about. Stella almost lost her temper, and she made several remarks which were calmly ignored by her opponent. Lugard was idiot enough to admire her high-heeled shoes and silk stockings, and to find Miss Leycester's flat thick boots unbecoming; to prefer her elaborate dressmaker's golfing costume, with its "lady's-maid's" rustle, to the faultless tailor-made outfit of his own partner. Yet even he was a little nettled at her curt refusal to play a bye when she and Captain Cunningham had lost the match at the thirteenth hole, and he had spirit enough to refuse her invitation to walk home by the cliffs, and to remain and finish the round with Miss Leycester. When they had holed out on the last green, and were on their way to the pavilion, she turned toward him.

"You admire Miss Manners very much, don't you?" she asked quietly.

"She is very pretty—and graceful," he answered. "I think every one admires her, don't they?"

She shrugged her shoulders. There was a gleam of humor in her dark bright eyes as she looked at him.

"I suppose," she remarked, "that you

consider yourself desperately in love with her. I wouldn't be, if I were you!"

"Why not?" he asked.

"You are very young," she answered, "too young even to imagine yourself in love with any one. Don't be annoyed with me. Lookers-on see so much, you know—and I am always a looker-on!"

That evening a surprise was in store for the guests at the hotel where they were all staying. Miss Leycester and her aunt, who had dined every night in their own sitting-room, came down to the table d'hôte. The aunt, who had spent most of her time in her own room, and of whom no one yet had obtained more than a casual glimpse, was tall, and of aristocratic appearance. She wore a handsome black lace dress, with some wonderful old-fashioned jewelry -her appearance as she walked slowly down the room, leaning on a a goldmounted stick, and followed by her maid carrying a cushion, was quite im-But the quiet little brown pressive. girl! She wore a muslin gown, quite fresh and new, whose superiority over the ordinary evening dress of the hotel sojourners, even Lugard unhesitatingly accepted; and a cluster of pink roses at her bosom which no local flower-seller had ever provided. She smiled charmingly at Lugard, who was so dumfounded that he had scarcely presence of mind enough to rise and bow Either of intent or otherwise, she ignored the table where Miss Manners and her friends were sitting. Stella colored slowly, and ate with little appetite. For the first time she recognized a rival.

Miss Leycester was sitting in the hall when Lugard came out, and beckoned to him just as Stella was advancing

with a smile.

"I want to introduce you to my aunt, Mr. Lugard," she said. "She used to know your father quite well, when he was vicar of Downminster."

Lugard looked a little perplexed.
"I thought that I knew most of my father's parishioners," he remarked.
Mrs. Templeman raised her eye-

glasses and nodded.

"I remember you quite well, Mr. Lu-

gard," she said. "You used to shoot rabbits in the park when you were quite a boy. Lord Downminster was my brother, you know, and I used to stay there a good deal."

Lugard smiled.

"Of course!" he exclaimed. "You once gave me a rook rifle on my birthday, and Lord Downminster took it away the next day because I shot a cat!"

Mrs. Templeman turned to her niece. "The colonel is coming in to have coffee with us, Elisabeth," she said. "If Mr. Lugard would make a fourth, we could have a rubber of bridge."

Miss Leycester looked up at him

with a smile.

"Perhaps you have made some other arrangement, Mr. Lugard?"

"Not at all," he assured her. "I

shall be delighted."

Stella looked distinctly annoyed as she saw Lugard follow the two ladies up to their sitting-room. She was not used to losing admirers, and she had never seriously regarded this quiet reserved girl as a possible rival. In her own mind she made plans for the morrow.

The Honorable Mrs. Templeman paused on the first landing and looked downward through her gold eye-glasses. Lugard had gone back again to order their coffee.

"Rather a scratch lot of people, Betty," she said. "The boy seems nice. What made you talk to him?"

Her niece smiled thoughtfully.

"He is making rather a fool of himself with that fair, showy-looking girl, Stella somebody or other," she said.

"I don't know why I should interfere really, but the girl annoys me. She is so hopelessly obvious. I hope it won't bore you to have him come up."

"I never allow any one to bore me," her aunt answered placidly. "Besides, he makes a fourth for bridge!"

For three days Lugard wavered. Stella treated him with greatly increased consideration, she changed her frocks continually, and she was always ready to talk nonsense. Miss Leycester, on the other hand, although she

was always bright and companionable. made no special effort to attract him, and seemed rather inclined to let him go his own way. The absolute simplicity of her dress and manners, and her perfect naturalness, appealed to him at times with their due significance, but he was unfortunately at that unholy age when the more obvious arts of the girl who has graduated in the profession of making herself agreeable to his sex are more likely to prevail. Gradually he became Stella's constant companion. One night after dinner, as they left the hotel together for a walk on the sea-front, and Stella from underneath her lace scarf had thrown an almost insolent glance at Miss Leycester sitting alone, Mrs. Templeman noticed them.

"So you couldn't teach your young man wisdom, Betty," she remarked.

Elisabeth answered lightly enough, but there was an undercurrent of regret in her tone, and her eyes, still fixed upon the door, were a little wistful.

"He is very young," she said. "The girl, too, is after all beautiful in her way. You really think of leaving this week, aunt?"

Mrs. Templeman nodded.

"The place is beginning to bore me," she said. "We will go to Scotland and stay with Bobby for a week or so."

They left the next day, and Stella carefully arranged a golf-match with Lugard for the time of their departure. From her place in the railway-train, Elisabeth looked out over the links and watched them playing. They were a very good-looking couple, and Lugard appeared to be completely absorbed by his companion. He did not even glance toward the train as it passed. Elisabeth leaned back in her corner. She was a very matter-of-fact young person, but there was a queer little pain at her heart just then, and she was never quite sure whether the mist was on the window-pane or in her eyes.

Lugard, unable to stop the frenzied rush, did what seemed to him to be the next best thing—he escaped from it. The idea of being borne to safety in the center of a howling mob of men and women, suddenly transformed into the likeness of beasts, revolted him. He opened the door of one of the deserted

boxes and stepped inside.

Below, in the stalls and pit, something of the same sort of scene was being enacted: from behind the lowered curtain came, every now and then, little vicious-looking puffs of smoke. Gazing around the house, he became suddenly aware that the box next to his was occupied. A woman's hand was resting upon the ledge. He leaned over, and recognized her at once.

"Miss Leycester!" he gasped.

She was a little pale, but there was in her face some trace of the same scorn, mingled with disgust, which had made him escape from the maddened path which led to safety. When she saw him, however, her whole expression changed. The smile which broke across her face was illumining, and it seemed to him that she had grown beautiful.

"How odd!" she exclaimed. "You, too, are waiting—until this is over. Do

come in and sit with me."

He swung himself into her box and seated himself opposite to her. She was apparently in the same place which she had occupied all the evening. Her program and opera-glasses were on the ledge in front of her.

"This is like you," he said quietly.
"I could never have imagined you—

down there!"

He pointed to the screaming crowd below, and her eyes followed his gesture.

"I'm playing my old rôle," she said

softly, "a looker-on always!"

He rose suddenly to his feet. His cheeks were blanched, his eyes were fastened upon one figure. A woman, tall and fair, was making frantic efforts to push her way from the center of the stalls. Her shrieks filled the air, her dress was half torn from her shoulders; she struck madly at every one within reach; the initial desire for personal safety at all costs burned in her terror-stricken, staring eyes. They saw her push off her feet and climb upon

the body of an older woman, to gain a few inches of ground. Miss Leycester said nothing, but she looked away with a little shudder.

"God in Heaven!" he muttered. "I left England because of that woman. I might, yes, I might have married

her!"

She opened her fan and commenced

to fan herself.

"Don't let us look any more," she said. "It makes one feel—so ashamed. Is the fire gaining ground, do you think?"

He wiped the sweat from his forehead. He, too, was brave, but it was

hard to match her coolness.

"I fancy so," he answered. "But the pity of it! There was time for every one to escape. There is now."

"Nothing can be done, I suppose?"

she asked.

He shook his head.

"I climbed on the stage, and stayed there shouting till my throat ached," he answered.

She nodded.

"I saw you! It was no good! It is like an epidemic, this madness. How fortunate to be here! Tell me, how long have you been back in England?"

"Three weeks," he answered.

"And it is just three years since we were down at Sheringham," she re-

marked.

Their door came crashing in, and a man lay groaning across the threshold. Outside, the stream was thicker than ever. Men and women stumbled over and kicked the prostrate body. Lugard helped him to his feet, and without a word of thanks he reeled once more like a drunken man into the throng

"Let me lift you into the other box," Lugard said. "The door is still fast

there."

She nodded. He went first, and she leaned over, trusting herself fearlessly to his arms. For a moment he forgot to release her. They stood there in the dimly lit box, and he felt her heart beat madly against his. A sudden wave of emotion swept over him. He forgot the horrors by which they were

surrounded. Some part of the passion which was vibrating in another key throughout the doomed building, seemed to be throbbing now in these few feet of darkened air around them. He held her face, pale no longer, up to his, and kissed her unresisting lips.

"Don't!" she murmured weakly.

"Oh, what an idiot I am!"

He laughed cheerfully.

"Not nearly such an idiot as I have

been," he answered.

"Escape," he remarked, a few minutes later, "has now become a necessity. Wait!" He opened the door carefully. The passage was empty. A fireman with a hydrant was sending a stream of water toward the blistering wall. He looked at them in surprise.

"Is the staircase still standing?" Lu-

gard asked.

"The extra exit is," the man answered. "It has never been used," he added grimly. "Straight through here, sir!"

Lugard threw his coat over his shoul-

ders.

"Come!" he said, and they walked out into the night.



GLOWWORMS

LIGHT'S dimness on the damp, dense grass, With a faint fragrance of regret, Too volatile the heart to fret, Though curbing gay moods as they pass.

Dusk depths of huge-limbed trees that sigh In sleepy whispers overhead, And on the path a black cloak spread; While 'mongst their boughs weird owl-wings fly.

Then, sudden, swift as flash of lance Beneath the beaming of the sun Where knights of old high honor won, The glowworms blink in happy chance!

Look! here and there, and there and here, They draw their little lantern-slides To find what forest secret hides Within a dewdrop's unshed tear!

And as they glimmer, far and low,
They mimic our wan lamps of hope,
Which flare, then wane; whilst on we grope
Where Fate's mist-haunted thickets grow.
WILLIAM STRUTHERS.



CHAPTER XVI.



T was not from Marston, then, that she had to fear betrayal. Neither was she any more afraid of the rumors of the Cliff Hotel. She was aware that her engagement to Robert Lucy, unan-

nounced but accepted for the simple fact it was, had raised her above censure and suspicion.

It had come just in time to occupy Mrs. Jurd and Miss Keating on their

way to Surbiton.

When Kitty thought of Grace Keating she said to herself: "How will Bunny feel now?" But her mortal exultation was checked by her pity for poor Bunny, who would have been so happy if she had been married.

Then there were the Hankins. She reflected sanely that they couldn't be dangerous, for they knew nothing. Still she did feel a little uneasy when

she thought of the Hankins.

She was thinking of them now as she and Robert sat on the cliff, making the most of their last hour together before the arrival of the little girls.

"Robert," she said, "the Hankins are probably sitting down there under the cliff. Supposing they see us?"

"They can't, we're over their heads." "But, if they do, what do you sup-

pose they'll think?"

"If they think at all, they'll have an inkling of the truth. But it isn't their business. The children will be here soon," he added.

She looked at him intently. Was he trying, she wondered, to reassure her that the presence of his children would protect her? Or was he merely preoccupied with the thought of their arrival?

"You don't mind," he said presently, "not coming to the station?"

He had said that already twice before. Why ask, she said, when he knew perfectly well she didn't mind?

Of course she didn't mind. knew his idea, that they were not to be confronted with her suddenly. meant to let her dawn on them beautifully, with the tenderest gradations, He would approach them with an incomparable cunning. He would tell them that they were going to see a very pretty lady. And when they were thoroughly inured to the idea of her, he would announce that the pretty lady was coming to stay with them, and that she would never go away.

She looked at her watch.

"We've got another half-hour before they come.'

"Kitty, I believe you're afraid of them?"

"Yes, Robert, I'm afraid."

"What? Of two small children?" "What are they like? I haven't asked you that."

"Well, Janet's a queer, uncanny little person, rather long for her age and very thin---

"Like you?"

"Like me. At first you think she's

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all legs. Then you see a little white face with enormous eyes that look at you as if she was wondering what you are."

He smiled. His mind had gone off, away from her, to the contemplation of

his little daughter.

"I think she's clever, but one never knows. We have to handle her very carefully. Barbara's all right. You can pitch her about like anything."

"What is—Barbara like?"

"Barbara? She's round and fat, and going to be pretty, like-

"Like her mother?"

"No, like Janey, if Janey was fat. They're both a little difficult to manage. If you reprove Barbara she bursts out laughing in your face. If you even hint to Janet that you disapprove of her she goes away somewhere and weeps."

"Poor little thing! I'm afraid," said Kitty sadly, "they're not so very small."

"Well, Janet, I believe, is seven, and Barbara is five.

"Barbara is five. And, oh, dear me,

Janet is seven."

"Is that such a very formidable age?" She laughed uneasily. "Yes. That's the age when they begin to take notice, isn't it?"

"Oh, no, they do that when they're babies. Even Barbara's grown out of that. I say, Kitty, what a lot you

"Don't, Robert." She looked at him imploringly and put her hand in his.

"I won't, if you'll only tell me what

I'm not to do."

"You're not to tease me about the things you think I don't know. I used to nurse my little sisters when I wasn't very big myself. I can't nurse Janet, or Barbara, can I?"

"Why not?"

"They wouldn't let me. They're too old. It won't be the same thing at all."

"Well-" said Robert, and paused, hiding from her the thing that was in his mind.

"Oh, Robert, I do wish, I do wish

they were really small."

"I'm sorry, Kitty. But perhaps---" He could not hide anything from

Kitty. "No, Robert," she said, "I'm afraid there won't be any perhaps. That's one of the things I meant to tell you. But I'm not bothering about that. I meant—if they were little—little things, I shouldn't be so dreadfully afraid of them."

"Why? What do you think they'll do to you, Kitty?"

I-don't-know."

"You needn't be alarmed. I believe they're very well-behaved. Jane has brought them up quite nicely."

"What is Jane going to do?" "Ah-that's what I wanted to ask

you about."

"You needn't ask me. You want her to stay and look after them just the

"No, not just the same. I want her to stay and she won't. She says it

wouldn't be fair to you."

"But-if she only would that would make it all so easy. You see, I could look after you, and she could look after them."

"You don't want to be bored with

them?"

"You know that isn't what I mean. I don't want them to suffer."

"Why should they suffer?" was some irritation in his tone.

"Because I don't think, Robert, I'm

really fit to bring up children."

"I think you are. And I don't mean anybody else to bring them up. If you're my wife, Kitty, you're their mother."

"And they're to be mine as well as

yours?"

"As much yours as you can make them, dear."

"Oh, how you trust me! That's what makes me so afraid. And-do you think they'll really love me?"

"Trust them-for that."

"You asked me if I could care for you, Robert; you never asked me if I could care for them. You trusted me for that?"

"I could have forgiven you if you

couldn't care for me.

"But you couldn't forgive me if I didn't care for them? Is that it?" "No, I simply couldn't understand any woman not caring for them. I think you will like the little things, when you've seen them."

"I'll promise you one thing. I won't

be jealous of them."

"Jealous? Why on earth should you be?"
"Some women are. I was afraid I

might be that sort."
"Why?"

"Because—oh, because I care for you so awfully. But that's just it. That's why I can't be jealous of them. They're yours, you see. I can't separate them from you."

"Well, well, let's wait until you've

seen them."

"Don't you believe me, Robert? Women do love their children before they've seen them. I don't need to see them. I have seen them. I saw them all last night."

She looked away from him, with eyes

fixed as if she still saw them.

"There's only one person I could be jealous of, and I'm not jealous of her any more."

"Poor little Jane."

"It wasn't Jane. It was their mother. I mean it was your wife."

He turned and looked at her. There was amazement in his kind simple face. "I suppose you think that's fiendish

of me?"

He did not reply.

"But—Robert—I'm not jealous of her any more. I don't care if she was your wife."

"Kitty, my dear child-"

"I don't care if she had ten children and I never had one. It's got nothing to do with it. She had you—for two years, wasn't it?"

"Two years, Kitty."

"Poor thing! And I shall have you

all my life.'

"Yes. And so, if you don't mind, dear, I'd rather you didn't talk about that again."

"I'm sorry. I won't ever again."

She sat silent a moment in a sort of penitential shame. Then she burst out. "I'm not jealous. But Robert, if you were to leave me for another woman it would kill me. I daren't say that to

any other man if I cared for him. It would just make him go and do it. But I believe somehow you'd think twice before you killed me."

He only smiled at that, and spoke gently.

"Yes Kitty, you're right. I believe

I would think twice about it."

He said to himself that this fierceness, her passionate perversity, all that was most unintelligible in her, was just Kitty's way, the way of a woman recklessly, adorably, in love. It stirred in him the very depths of tenderness. When she was married—they must marry very soon—she would be happy; she would understand him; she would settle down.

He looked at his watch. "I'm afraid

I must be going."

She glanced at the hands of the watch over his shoulder. "You needn't," she said. "It isn't really time."

"Well-five minutes."

The five minutes went. "Time's up," he said.

"Oh, no, Robert-not yet."

"Kitty—don't you want to see them?"
"I don't want you to go."

"I'm coming back."

"Yes, but it won't be the same thing. It never will be the same thing as now."

"Poor Kitty! I say, I must go and meet them."

neet them.

"Very well." She stood up. "Kiss me," she said.

She took his kiss as if it were the last that would be given her.

They went together to the hotel. Jane had started five minutes ago for the station.

"It's all right," he said. "I'll catch

her up.'

She followed to the gates and looked down the white road where Jane had gone.

"Let me come with you—just a little way—to the first lamp-post on the station road."

"Well, to the first lamp-post."

At the lamp-post she let him go. She stood looking after him till he swung round the turn of the road, out of her sight. Then she went back, slowly, sad-eyed, and with a great terror in her heart.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was not the thing she had confessed to him, fear of his little unseen children; it was terror, unconfessed, uncomprehended, as it were foreknowledge of the very soul of destiny, clothed for her in their tender

flesh and blood.

Up till now she had been careless of her destiny. She had been so joyous, so defiant in her sinning. By that charm of hers; younger than youth, indestructibly childlike, she had carried it through with the audacity of chartered innocence. She had propitiated, ignored, eluded the more feminine amenities of fate. Of course she had had her bad moments. She had been sorry, sometimes, and she had been sick; but on the whole her powers had been splendidly recuperative. She had shown none of those naked tender spots that provoke destiny to strike. And with it all she had preserved, perhaps too scrupulously, the rules laid down for such as she. She had kept to her own place. She had never attempted to invade the sanctuaries set apart for other women.

It was Robert who had tempted her to that transgression. He had opened the door of the sanctuary for her and shut it behind her and put his back against it. He had made her believe that if she stayed in there, with him, it would be all right. She might have known what would happen. It was for such a moment, of infatuation made perfect, that destiny was waiting.

Kitty had no very luminous idea of its intentions. But she bore in her blood forebodings, older and obscurer than the flashes of the brain; and her heart had swift immortal instincts, forerunners of the mortal hours. The powers of pain, infallibly wise, implacably just, would choose their moment well, striking at her through the hands of the children she had never borne.

If Robert found out what she was, before he married her, he would have to give her up, because of them. She knew better than he did the hold she had over him. She had tried to keep him in ignorance of her power, so great was her terror of what it might do to him, and to her through him. Yet, with all her sad science, she remained uncertain of his ultimate behavior. That was the charm and the danger of him. For fear of some undiscovered, uncalculated quality in him she had held herself back; she had been careful how she touched him, how she looked at him, lest her hands or her eyes should betray her; lest in his heart he should call her by her name, and fling her from him, because of them.

Whereas, but for them, she judged that whatever she was he would not give her up. She was not quite sure—you couldn't say what a man like Robert would or wouldn't do—but she felt that if she could have had him to herself, if there had been only he and she, facing the world, then, for sheer chivalry, he simply couldn't have left her. Even now, once he was married to her it would be all right; he couldn't give her up or leave her; the worst he could do would be to separate her from

them.

There was really no reason, then, why she should be frightened. He was going to marry her very soon. She knew that, by her science, though he had not said so. She would be all right. She would be very careful. It wasn't as if she didn't want to be nice and to do all the proper things.

And so Kitty cast off care.
Only, as she waited in the room prepared for the children, she looked at herself in the glass, once, to make sure that there was nothing in her face that could betray her. No: nature had spared her as yet, and her youth was good to her. Her face looked back at her, triumphantly reticent, innocent of memory, holding her charm, a secret beyond the secrets of corruption, as her perfect body held the mystery and the prophecy of her power.

Besides, her face was different now from what it had been. Wilfrid had intimated to her that it was different. It was the face that Robert loved; it had the look that told him that she loved him, a look it never wore for any other man. Even now, as she thought of him it lightened and grew rosy. She saw it herself, and wondered, and took hope.

"That's how I look when I'm happy, is it? I'm always happy when I'm with him, so," she reasoned, "he will always see me like that; and it will be

all right."

Anyhow, there would be no unhappiness about his pretty lady when he

came back, with them.

She smiled softly as she went about the room, putting the touches of perfection to the festival. There were roses everywhere; on the table, on the mantelpiece; the room was sweet with the smell of them; there was a rose on each child's plate. The tremulous movements of her hands betrayed the immensity and the desperation of her passion to please.

The very waiter was touched by her, and smiled secretly in sympathy as he saw her laying her pretty lures. When he had gone she arranged the table all over again, and did it better. Then she stood looking at it, hovering round it, thinking. She would sit here, and the children there, Janet between her and Robert, Barbara between her and

Jane.
"Poor little things," she said, "poor little things." She yearned to them even in her fear of them, and when she thought of them sitting there her lips moved in unspoken, pitiful endear-

ments.

The light from the southwest streamed into the little room and made it golden. Everything in it shimmered and shone. The window, flung wide open to the veranda, framed the green lawn and the shining, shimmering sea. A wind, small and soft, stirred the thin curtains to and fro, fanning the warm air. The sunlight and heat oppressed her. She shut her eyes and put her hands over them to cool them with darkness. It was a trick she had when she was troubled.

She sat by the window and waited in

the strange, throbbing darkness of hot eyes closed in daylight, a darkness smitten by the sun and shot with a fiery fume.

They were coming now. She heard feet on the gravel outside, round the corner; she heard Robert's voice and Janey's; and then little shuffling footsteps at the door, and two voices shrill and sweet.

Robert came in first, and the children with him. They stood all three on the threshold, looking at her. Robert was smiling, but the little girls—they were very little—were grave. His eyes drew her and she came toward them as she was used to come to the things of her desire, swift and shy, with a trailing, troubling movement; the way that he had seen her come, swayed by the rhythm of impulse.

The children stood stock-still as she stooped to them. Her fear of them made her supremely gentle. Little Barbara put up her round rose face with its soft mouth thrust forward in a premature kiss. Janet gave her a tiny hand and gazed at her with brooding, irresponsive eyes. Her little mouth never moved as Kitty's mouth touched

it.

But little Barbara held out her spade and bucket for Kitty to see.

"Look, look," said little Barbara, "Daddy gave them me to build castles in the sand."

Barbara spoke so fast that she panted, and laughed in a divine super-

fluity of joy.

Robert stood looking down from his tremendous height at Barbara, tenderly, as one who contemplates a thing at once heartrending and absurd. Then his eyes turned to Kitty, smiling quietly as if they said:

"Didn't I tell you to wait until you'd

seen them?"

Kitty's heart contracted with a sharp, abominable pang.

Then Janey took the little girls to the room up-stairs where their nurse was. Barbara looked back at Kitty as she went, but Kitty's eyes followed Janet.

"Robert," she said, "will she always

look at me like that? Shall I never know what she's thinking?"

"None of us know what Janet's think-

ing."

He paused.

"I told you we had to be very careful of her."

"Is she delicate?"

"No. Physically, she's far stronger than Barbara. She's what you'd call morally delicate."

She flushed. "What do you mean,

Robert?"

"Well-not able to bear things. For instance, we'd a small child staying with us once. It turned out that she wasn't a nice child at all. We didn't know it, though. But Janet had a perfect horror of her. It's as if she had a sort of intuition. She was so unhappy about it that we had to send the child away."

His forehead was drawn with a frown

of worry and perplexity.

"I don't see how she's to grow up. It makes me feel so awfully responsible. The world isn't an entirely pretty place, you know, and it seems such a cruel shame to bring a child like that into it. Doesn't it?

"Somehow I think you'll understand her, Kitty.'

"Yes, Robert, I understand."

She came to him. She laid her hand on the sleeve of his coat, and stood by him. Her eyes were shining through some dew that was not tears.

"What is it, Kitty?"

"Will you marry me soon?" she said. "Very soon," she whispered. "I—I can't wait." She hid her face against his arm.

"Why should we wait? Do you sup-

pose I want to?"

"Hush," she said. "They're com-

ing."

They came a little solemnly, as beseemed a festival. Janet, in her long white pinafore, looked more than ever the spiritual thing she was. Her long brown hair hung down her cheeks, straight and smooth as a parted veil, sharpening her small face that flickered as a flame flickers in troubled air. Be-

side her, little Barbara bloomed and glowed, with cheeks full-blown and cropped head flowering into curls that stood on end in brown tufts, and tawny feathers, and little crests of gold. They took their places, pensively, at the table.

They had beautiful manners, Robert's children; little exquisite, gentle ways of approaching and of handling things. They held themselves very erect, with a secure, diminutive distinction. Kitty's heart sank deeper as she looked at them. Even Barbara, who was so very young, carried her small perfections intact through all the spontaneities of her behavior.

All through tea-time little Barbara, pursued by her dream, talked incessantly of castles in the sand. And when she was tired of talking she began to

"Darling," said Jane, "we don't sing at tea-time.

said little Barbara, and "I do,"

laughed. Jane laughed, too, hysterically.

Then the spirit of little Barbara entered into Jane and made her ungovernably gay. It passed into Kitty and ran riot in her blood and nerves. Whenever Barbara laughed Kitty laughed, and when Kitty laughed Robert laughed, too. Even Janet gave a little shriek now and then. The children thought it was all because they had had strawberries and cream for tea, and were going down to the sea to build castles in the sand.

All afternoon, till dinner-time, Kitty labored on the sands, building castles as if she had never done anything else in her life. The Hankins watched her from their seat on the rocks in the

angle of the cliff. "We were mistaken. She must be all right. How pretty she is, too, poor thing," said Mrs. Hankin to her hus-

"How pretty she is, how absolutely lovable and good," said Robert to himself as he watched her, while Bar-bara, a tired little laborer, lay stretched in her lap. She was sitting on a rock under the cliff, with the great brow of it for a canopy. Her eyes were low-

ered and hidden by their deep lids. She was smiling at the child who leaned back in her arms, crushing a soft cheek against her breast.

He threw himself down beside her. He had just finished a prodigious fortress, with earthworks and trenches ex-

tending to the sea.

"Kitty-Kitty," he said, "you're only a child yourself, like Janey. She's perfectly happy building castles in the sand; so are you. You're a perfect

"We're all babies, Robert, building castles in the sand. And you're the

biggest baby of the lot."

"I don't care. I've built the biggest

castle."

"Look at Janet," said Kitty. "She'll

be grown up before any of us.

The child sat on a rock with Jane. But, from the distance that she kept, she looked at her father and Kitty from time to time. All afternoon Janet had clung to Jane. But when bedtime came Robert took her aside and whispered something to her. Going home she walked by Kitty and put her hand in

"Daddy said I'm to be very kind to

"Did he? That's very kind of dad-

"Daddy's always kind to people. Especially when they've not been very happy. Really and truly I'm going to be kind. But you won't mind if I don't love you very soon, will you?"

"Of course I won't. Only don't leave it too late, darling."

"Well, I don't know," said Janet thoughtfully; "we've lots of time."

"Have we?"

"Heaps and heaps. You see, I love Auntie Janey, and it might hurt her feelings.

"I see."

"But I'm going to give you something," said Janet presently.

"I don't want you to give me anything that belongs to Auntie Janey."

"No," said Janet, "I shall give you something of my own."

"Oh! And you can't tell me what it's going to be?"

"I must think about it." The little girl became lost in thought. "Barbara likes kissing people. I don't."

'So I see. It won't be kisses, then?" "No; it won't be kisses. It will," she reiterated, "be something of my own."

She dropped Kitty's hand.

"You won't mind if I go to Auntie Janey now?"

Kitty told Janey about it afterward, as they sat alone in the lounge before

dinner.

"You mustn't mind, Kitty, dear," said Jane. "It only means that she's a faithful little soul. She'll be just as faithful to you, some day."

"Some day."

"Don't sigh like that, Kitty." "She's like Robert, isn't she?"

"Very like Robert."

She brooded. "Janey," she said, "let me have him to myself this evening.

All evening she had him to herself, out on the cliff, in the place where nobody came but they.

"Well," he said, "what do you think of them?"

"I think they're adorable."

"Funny little beggars, aren't they? How did you get on with Janet?"

She told him.

"That's Janet's little way-to give you something of her own." He smiled in tender satisfaction, repeating the child's phrase.

"It's all right, Kitty. She's only holding herself in. You're in for a big

She surveyed it.

"I know, Robert. I know."
"You're tired? Have the children been too much for you?'

She shook her head.

"You're not to make yourself a slave to them, you know."

She looked at him. "Was I all right, Robert?"

"You were perfect."

"You said I was only a child my-

"So you are. That's why I like you." She shook her head again.

"It's all very well," she said, "but that isn't what you want, dear-another child."

"How do you know what I want?"
"You want somebody much nicer
than I am."

He was silent, looking at her as he had looked at Barbara, enjoying her absurdity, letting her play, like the child she was, with her preposterous idea.

"Oh, Robert, you do really think I'm nice?" She came nearer to him crying out like a child in pain. He put his arm round her and comforted her as best he could.

"You child, do you suppose I'd marry you if I didn't think you nice?"

"You might. You mightn't care."
"As it happens, I do care, very much.
Anyhow, I wouldn't ask you to be a
mother to my children if I didn't think
you nice. That's the test."

"Yes, Robert," she repeated. "That's

the test."

They rose and went back to the hotel. From the lawn they could see the open window of the children's room. They looked up.

"Would you like to see them, Kitty?"

"Yes."

He took her up to them. They were asleep. Little Barbara lay curled up in the big bed, right in the middle of it where her dreams had tossed her. Janet, in the cot beside her, lay very straight and still.

Robert signed to Kitty to come near, and they stood together and looked first at the children and then into each other's face. Kitty was very quiet.

"Do you like them?" he whispered. Her lips quivered, but she made no

sign.

He stooped over each bed, smoothing the long hair from Janet's forehead, folding back the blanket that weighed on Barbara's little body. When he turned Kitty had gone. She had slipped into her own room.

She waited till she heard Robert go away. The children were alone in there. The nurse, she knew, was in Jane's room across the passage. Jane was probably telling her that her master was to be married very soon.

She looked out. The door of Jane's room was shut; so was the door of the children's room through which Robert had gone out. The other, the door of communication, she had left ajar. She went softly back through it and stood again by the children's beds. Janet was still sound asleep. Her fine limbs were still stretched straight and quiet under the blanket. Her hair was as Robert's hand had left it.

Kitty was afraid of disturbing Janet's sleep. She was afraid of Janet.

She stooped over little Barbara, and turned back the bedclothes from the bed. She laid herself down, half her length, upon it by Barbara's side, and folded her in arms that scarcely touched her at first, so light they lay on her. Then some perverse and passionate impulse seized her to wake the child. She did it gently, tenderly, holding back her passion, troubling the depths of sleep with fine featherlike touches, with kisses soft as sleep.

The child stirred under the caressing arms. She lay in her divine beauty. half asleep, half awake, opening her eyes, and shutting them on the secret of her dream. Then Kitty's troubling hand turned her from her flight down the ways of sleep. She lay on her back, her eyes glimmered in the lifting of their lids, they opened under Kitty's eyes that watched them, luminous, large and clear. Her mouth curled under Kitty's mouth, in drowsy kisses plucked from the annihilated dream. She drew up her rosy knees and held out her arms to Kitty's arms, and smiled, half awake and half asleep.

Kitty rose, lifting the child with her from the bed. She held her close, pressing the tender body close to her own body with quivering hands; stroking the adorable little face with her own face, closing her eyes under the touch of it as she closed them when Robert's face touched hers. She was aware that she had brought some passionate, earthly quality of her love for Robert into her love for Robert's child.

She said to herself: "I'm terrible. There's something wrong with me. This isn't the way to love a child."

She laid the little thing down again; freed her neck from the drowsy, detaining arms, and covered the small

body up out of her sight. Barbara, thus abandoned, cried, and the cry cut

through her heart.

She went into her own room, and threw herself on her bed and writhed there, torn by many pangs. The pang of the heart and the pang of the half-born spirit, struggling with the body that held it back from birth; and through it all the pang of the mother-hood she had thwarted and disowned. Out of the very soil of corruption it pierced, sharp and pure, infinitely painful. It was almost indiscernible from the fierce exultation of her heart that had found fulfilment, and from the passion of her body that yet waited for its own.

She undressed herself, and crept into her bed and lay there, tortured, visited by many memories. She gazed with terrified, pitiful eyes into a darkness that was peopled for her with all the faces she had known in the brief seasons of her sinning; men, and the women who had been her friends and her companions, and the strangers who had passed her by, or who had lingered and looked on. The faces of Robert and his children hung somewhere on the outskirts of her vision, but she could not fix them or hold them; they were trampled out, obliterated by that phantasmal procession of her shames.

Some faces, more terrible than the rest, detached themselves and crowded round her, the faces of those who had pursued her, and of those whom her own light feet pursued; from the first who had found her and left her, to the last whom she herself had held captive and let go. They stood about her bed; they stretched out their hands and touched her; their faces peered into hers; faces that she had forgotten.

She thrust them from her into the darkness and they came again. Each bore the same likeness to his fellow; each had the same looks, the same gestures that defied her to forget. She fell asleep; and the dreams, the treacherous, perpetually remembering, delivered her into their hands.

She waked at dawn, with memory quickened by her dreams. She heard voices now, all the voices that had accused her. Her mother's voice spoke first, and it was very sad. It said: "I am sending you away, Kitty, because of the children." Then her father's voice, very stern: "No, I will not have you back. You must stay where you are for your little sisters' sake." And her mother's voice again—afterward—sad and stern, too, this time: "As you've made your bed, Kitty, you must lie. We can't take you back."

And there was a third voice. It said very softly: "You can't have it both ways." It cried out aloud in a fury: "I've always known it. You can't hide it. You're full of it." And yet another voice, deep and hard: "You can't not tell him. It's a shame,

Kitty; it's an awful shame."

She could not sleep again for listening to them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was morning. She dragged herself up and tried to dress. But her hands shook and her head ached violently. She stretched herself half dressed upon her bed and lay there helpless, surrendered to the bodily pain that delivered her mercifully from the

anguish of her mind.

She saw no one, not even Jane Lucy. Outside, in the passage, and in the inner room she heard the footsteps of the children and their little shrill voices; each sound accentuated the stabbing pulse of pain. It was impossible to darken the room, and the insufferable sunlight poured in unchecked through the thin yellow blinds and plagued her brain, till the nerves of vision throbbed, beat for beat, with the nerves of torment. At noon she had only one sensation of brilliant, surging pain.

She dozed and her headache lifted. When she woke her body was weak as if it had had a fever, but her mind closed on reality with the impact of a

force delayed.

There was a thing not yet quite real to her, a thing that seemed to belong to the region of bodily pain, to be born there as a bad dream might be born; a thing that had been there last night among the other things, that, as she stared at it, became more prominent, more poignant than they. And yet, though its air was so beckoning and so familiar, it was not among the number of things accomplished and irrevocable. It was simply the thing she had to do.

It possessed her now; and under its dominion she was uplifted, carried along. Her mind moved toward it with a reckless rocking speed, the perilous

certainty of the insane.

At five o'clock she rang the bell and asked the servant to bring her some tea. She swallowed a little with a jerk of her throat, and put the cup down, shuddering. It brought her a sickening memory of yesterday.

At five o'clock she got up and dressed herself and sent a message to Robert Lucy to see her down-stairs in her sitting-room, alone. As she stood at her glass she said to herself:

"How shocking I look. But he won't mind."

At six he was with her.

She drew her hand away from his as if his touch had hurt her. Her smile was the still, bloodless smile that comes with pain. She drew her chair back out of the sunlight, in the recess by the fireplace. He stood beside her then, looking at her with eyes that loved her the more for the sad hurt done to her beauty. His manner recalled the shy adolescent uncertainty of his first approaches.

"Don't you think," he said, "you

ought to have stayed in bed?"

She shook her head and struggled to find her voice. It came convulsively. "No.

I'm better. I'm all right

now.'

"It was being out in that beastly hot sun yesterday-with those youngsters. You're not used to it."

She laughed. "No. I'm not used to it. Robert-you haven't told them, have you?"

"What?"

"About you-and me?"

"No. Not yet." He smiled. "I say, I shall have to tell them very soon, sha'n't I?"

"You needn't."

He made some inarticulate sound that questioned her.

"I've changed my mind. I can't mar-

ry you."

He had to bend his head to catch her low indistinct murmur; but he caught

He drew back from her, and leaned against the chimneypiece, and looked at her more intently than before.

"Do you mean," he said quietly, "because of them?"

"Yes."

He looked down.

"Poor Kitty," he said. "You think I'm asking too much of you?"

She didn't answer.

"You're afraid?"

"I told you I was afraid."

"Yes. But I thought it was all right. I thought you liked them.'

She was silent. Tears rose to her eyes and hung on their unsteady lashes.

"They like you." She bowed her head and the tears

"Is that what's upset you?"

"Yes."

"I see. You've been thinking it over and you find you can't stand it. I don't wonder. You've let those little monkeys tire you out. You've nearly got a sunstroke, and you feel as if you'd rather die than go through another day like yesterday? Well, you sha'n't. There'll never be another day like yesterday."

"No. Never," she said; and her sobs

choked her.

"Why should there be? They'll have a governess. You don't suppose I meant you to have them on your hands all the time?"

She went on crying softly. He sat on the arm of her chair and put his arm

round her and dried her eyes.

"Don't be unhappy about it, Kitty. I understand. You're not marrying them, dear; you're marrying me.'

She broke loose from him.

"I can't marry you," she cried. "I can't give you what you want."

"Do you mean that you don't care for me? Is that what you're trying to tell me all the time?"

He moved and she cowered back into her chair.

"I-I can't tell you."

He had turned from her. He was leaning his arms along the mantelshelf; he had bowed his head on them.

They remained for some minutes so; she cowering back; he with his face hidden from her.

"Do you mind telling me," he said presently, "if there's anybody else that

you—

"That I care for? No, Robert, there's

"Are you quite sure? Quite honest? Think."

"Do you mean Wilfrid Marston?"

"Yes."

"I certainly do not care for him."
He raised his head at that; but he did not look at her.

"Thank God!" he said.

"Do you think as badly of him as all that?"

"Don't ask me what I think of him."
"Would you think badly of me if I'd married him?"

"I—I couldn't have stood it, Kitty."
"I am not going to marry him."

"You haven't said yet that you don't care for me?"

"No. I haven't."

He turned and stooped over her, compelling her to look at him.

"Say it then," he said.

She drew back her face from his and put up her hands between them. He rose and stood before her and looked down at her. The blue of her eyes had narrowed, the pupils stared at him, black and feverish. Her mouth, which had been tight shut, was open slightly. A thin flush blurred its edges. Her breath came through, short and sharp.

"You're ill," he said. "You must

go back to bed."

"No," she said. "I've got to tell you something."

"If you do I sha'n't believe it."
"What won't you believe?"

"That you don't care for me. I can't believe it."

"You'd better, Robert."

"I don't. There's something wrong. You must tell me what it is."

"There's nothing wrong but that. I

—I made a mistake."
"You only thought you liked me? Or
is it worse than that?"

"It's worse, far worse."

"I see. You tried to like me. And you couldn't?"

She was silent.

"Poor child! I've been a selfish brute. I might have known you couldn't. You've hardly known me ten days. But if I wait, Kitty—if I give you time to think?"

"If you gave me ten years it would

do no good."

"I see," he said. "I see."

He gripped the edge of the mantelpiece with both his hands, his tense arms trembled from the shoulders to the wrists, his hold relaxed. He straightened himself and hid his shaking hands in his coat-pockets. There were tears at the edges of his eyelids, the small, difficult tears that cut their way through the flesh that abhors them.

She saw them.

"Ah, Robert—do you care for me like

"You know how I care for you."

He stopped as he swung away from her, remembering that he had failed in courtesy.

"Thank you," he said simply, "for

telling me the truth."

He reached the door; and she rose and came after him. He shook his head as a sign to her not to follow him. She saw that he was going from her because he was tortured and dumb with suffering and with shame.

Then she knew what she must do.
She called to him; she entreated.
"Robert—don't go. Come back—come back—I can't bear it."

He came back at that cry.

"I haven't told you the truth. I

"When?" he said sternly.

"Just now. When I told you that I didn't care for you."

"Well?"

"Sit down. Here, on the sofa, I'll

try and tell you."

He sat down, beside her, but not near. She leaned forward, with her elbows on her knees, and her head propped on her clenched hands. She did not look at him as she spoke.

"I said I didn't care because I thought that was the easiest way out of it. Easiest for you. Easier than knowing the truth."

He smiled grimly. "Well-you see

how easy it's been."
"Yes." She paused.

"The truth isn't going to be easy.

either.'

"Let's have it, all the same, Kitty." "You're going to have it." She paused again, breathing hard. "Have you never wondered why the people here avoided me? You know they thought things."

"As if it mattered what

thought."

"They were right. There was some-

thing."

She heard him draw a deep breath. He, too, leaned forward now, in the same attitude as she, as if he were the participator of her confession and the accomplice of her shame. His face was level with hers, but his eyes looked straight past her, untainted and clear.

"What if there was?" he said. "It

makes no difference."

She turned her sad face to his.

"Don't you know, Robert, don't you

He frowned impatiently.

"No, I don't. I don't want to."

"You'd rather think I didn't care for

His face set again in its tortured, dumb look.

"You sha'n't think that of me."

She leaned back again out of his sight; and he presented to her his shoulder, thrust forward, and his profile, immovable, dogged, and apparently un-

"It's because I cared for you that I couldn't tell you the truth. I tried and couldn't. It was so difficult and you , wouldn't understand. Then Wilfrid Marston said I must-I had to tell

He threw himself back and turned on

"What had Marston to do with it?" Her voice and her eyes dropped.

"You see-he knew."

"I see."

He waited.

"I couldn't tell you."

His silence conveyed to her that he listened since she desired it, that he left it to her to tell him as much or as little as she would, and that thus he trusted her.

"I was afraid," she said,

"What? Afraid of me, Kitty?" "I thought it would make you not

care for me.'

"I don't think anything you can tell me will make any difference."

"You said yourself it would. You said you wouldn't marry me if I wasn't

He looked up impatient and surprised.

"But we've been through all that," he

"No, we haven't. When I said I wasn't nice I meant that there were things I-

"Well?"

"I-I wasn't married to Charley Tailleur."

He took it in silence; and through the silence she let it sink in.

"Where is the fellow?" he asked pres-

"He's dead. I told you that."

"I'd forgotten."

There was another silence.

"Did you care for him very much, Kitty?"

"I don't know. Yes. No, I don't know. It wasn't the same thing.'

"Never mind. It's very good of you to tell me."

"I didn't mean to."

"What made you tell me?"

"Seeing the children. I thought I could go on deceiving you; but when I saw them I knew I couldn't.

"I see." His voice softened. "You've told me because of them. I'm glad you told me." He paused on that.

"Well," he said, "we must make the best of it."

"That makes no difference."

"No. Not now."

She sighed.

"How long ago was it?" he asked.

"Five years. Charley Tailleur was the first."

"What?"

"The first. There were others. Ever so many others. I'm—that sort."

"I don't believe you."

"You've got to believe me. You can't marry me, and you've got to see why."

She also paused. Her silences were

terrible to him.

"I thought you did see once. It didn't seem possible that you couldn't. Do you remember the first time I met you?"

He remembered.

"I thought you saw then. And afterwards—don't you remember how you followed me out of the room another night?"

"Yes."

"I thought you understood—and were too shy to say so. But you didn't, Then—do you remember how I waited for you at the end of the garden—and how we sat out on the cliff? I was trying then—the way I always try. I thought I'd make you—and you—you wouldn't see it. You only wanted to help me. You were so innocent and dear. That's what made me love you."

"Oh!" he groaned. "Don't!"

But she went on. "And do you remember how you found me—that night—out on the cliff?"

She drew back her voice softly.

"I was sure then that you knew, and that when you asked me to come back with you—"

"Look here, Kitty, I've had enough of it."

"You haven't, for you're fond of me still. You are, aren't you?"

"Oh, my God, how do I know?"

"I know. It's because you haven't taken it in. What do you think of this? You've known me ten days, and ten days before that I was with Wilfrid Marston."

He had taken it in at last. She had

made it real to him, clothed it in flesh and blood.

"If you don't believe me," she said, "ask him. That's what he came to see me for. He wanted me to go back to him. In fact, I wasn't supposed to have left him."

He put his hand to his forehead as if he were trying to steady his mind to face the thing that stunned it.

"And you're telling me all this be-

cause—" he said dully.

"Because I want to make you loathe me, so that you can go away and be glad that you'll never see me again. And if it hurts you too much to think of me as I am, just say to yourself that I cared for you, and that I couldn't have done that if I'd been quite bad." She cried out. "It would have been better for me if I had been. I shouldn't feel then. It wouldn't hurt me to see little children. I should have got over that long ago and I shouldn't have cared for you or them. I shouldn't have been able to. And then-I needn't have let you care for me. That was the worst thing I ever did. But I was so happy -so happy."

He could not look at her. He covered his face with his hands and she

knew that he cared still.

Then she came and knelt down beside him and whispered. He got up and broke away from her and she followed him.

"You can't marry me now," she said.

And he answered: "No."

CHAPTER XIX.

He did not leave her. They sat still, separated by the length of the little room, staring, not at each other but at some point in the distance, as if each brain had flung and fixed there the same unspeakable symbol of its horror.

Her face, sharp with pain, was strangely purified, spiritualized by the immortal moment that uplifted her. His face, grown old in a moment, had lost its look of glad and incorruptible inno-

Not that he was yet in full possession of reality. His mind was sunk in the stupor that follows after torture. It kept its hold by one sense only, the vague discerning of profound responsibility, and of something profounder still, some tie binding him to Kitty, immaterial, indestructible, born of their communion in pain.

It kept him, by its intangible compulsion, sitting there in the same small room, divided from her, but still there, still wearing that strange air of par-

ticipation, of complicity.

And, all the time, he kept saying to himself: "What next?"

There was a knock at the door.

"It's Jane," he said. "I'll tell her not to come in." His voice sounded hoarse and unlike his own.

"Oh, mayn't I see her?"

He looked up with his clouded eyes. "Do you want to?"

"Yes."

He considered. He hesitated.

"Do you mind?"

"Mind?" he repeated. As if, after what they had gone through, there could ever be anything to mind. It seemed to him that things would always henceforth be unsubstantial, and events utterly unimportant. He tried with an immense effort to grasp this event of Jane's appearance and of Kitty's attitude to Jane.
"I thought," he said, "perhaps she

would bother you.'

The knock came again.
"Robert," she said, "I don't want her

to know-what I told you."

"Of course not," he said. "Come in." Jane came in and closed the door behind her. She had a letter folded tightly in her hand. She stood there a moment, looking from one to the other. It was Kitty who spoke.

"Come in, Janey," she said. "I want

you."

Jane came forward and stood between them. She looked at Robert who hardened his face, and at Kitty who was

trembling.

"Has anything happened?" she said. And Kitty answered: "No. Nothing will happen now. I've just told him that it can't.

"You've given him up?"

"Yes. I've-given-him up." She drew in her breath on the "Yes,"

so that it sounded like a sob. The other words came slowly from her, one by one, as if she repeated them by rote, without knowing what they meant.

Jane turned to her brother. "And

you've let her do it?"

He was silent, still saying to himself: "What next?"

"Of course he's let me. He knows it was the only thing I could do.'

"Kitty-what made you do it?" Kitty closed her eyes. Robert saw

her and gave a low inarticulate sound of misery. Jane heard it and understood.

"Kitty," she said, "have you made him believe you don't care for him?" She sat down on the couch beside her and covered her hands with her own.

"It isn't true, Robert," she said. "She doesn't know what she's doing. Kitty, tell him it isn't true."

The trembling hands broke loose from her. Kitty sobbed once and was still. At the sound Robert turned on Jane.

"Leave her alone," he said, "she doesn't want to be bothered about it

now."

Kitty's hand moved back along the couch to Jane. "No," she said, "don't make her leave me. I'm going away so soon.'

He started at that answer to his question: "What next?"

"Tell me what made you do it," said Jane again.

"Whatever it was," he said, "she's

doing perfectly right."

"I know what she's doing. And I know why she's doing it. Can't you see why?'

Robert, who had stood looking at her helplessly, turned away at the direct appeal and walked up and down, up and down the room. He was still saying to himself: "And if she goes, what next?"

"She doesn't mean it, Robert. It's these wretched people who have driven her to it with the abominable things they've said and thought. You can't let her give you up. Don't you see that it'll look as if you didn't believe in her. And he does believe in you, Kitty, dear. He doesn't care what anybody says."

"Leave it alone, Janey. You don't know what you're talking about. You don't even know what it is they say."

"I do," said Jane. She rose and went to her brother and thrust the letter she held into his hand. "Look there, that came just now."

He glanced at the letter, lit a match and set fire to it, and dropped the ashes into the grate.

"Look at him, Kitty, look at him!" she cried triumphantly.

"What was in that letter?"

"Nothing that matters."
"Who wrote it?"

"Nobody who matters in the very least."

"Was it Mr. Marston? Tell me."

"No."

"He wouldn't," said Kitty thoughtfully. "It's women who write letters. It must have been Grace Keating. She hates me."

"I know she hates you. Do you see now why Kitty's giving you up?"

"She has told me herself, Janey. She may have more reasons than you know."

"She has none, none that I don't know. They're all there in that letter which you've burned. Can't you see why it was written?"

"Does it matter why?"

"Yes, it does matter. It was written to make you give Kitty up. There's no reason why I should spare the woman who wrote it. She hates Kitty-because she wanted you for herself. Kitty knows that she's slandered her. She did it before she went, to her face, and Kitty forgave her. And now the poor child thinks that she'll let you go, and just creep away quietly and hide herself —from that. And you'll let her do it? You believe her when she says she doesn't care for you? If that isn't caring-Why, it's because she cares for you, and cares for your honor more than she does for her own, poor darling-

"I know, Janey. And she knows I

know."

"Then where's your precious honor if you don't stand up for her? She's got nobody but you, and if you don't defend her from that sort of thing—"

She stood before him, flaming, and Kitty rose and put herself between

"He can't defend me, Janey. It's the truth."

CHAPTER XX.

She had left them to each other. It was eight o'clock. She had crept back again to the bed that was her refuge, where she had lain for the last hour, weeping to exhaustion. She had raised herself at the touch of a hand on her hot forehead. Jane was standing beside her.

"Kitty," she said, "will you see Robert for a moment? He's waiting for you down-stairs, in your room."

Kitty dropped back again on her pillow with her arm over her face, warding off Jane's gaze.

"No," she said, "I can't see him. I can't go through that again."

"But Kitty, there's something he

wants to say to you."

"There's nothing he can say. Nothing—nothing. Tell him I'm going away."

"You mustn't go without seeing him."
"I must. It's the only way."

"For you—yes. How about him?" Kitty sighed. She stirred irresolutely on her pillow.

"No, no," she said. "I've done it once. I can't do it all over again."

"I suppose," said Jane, "it is easier—not to see him."

At that Kitty clenched her hands. "Easier?" she cried. "I'd give my soul to see him for one minute—one minute, Janey."

She turned, stifling her sobs on her pillow. They ceased and the passion that was in her had its way then. She lay on her face, convulsed, biting into the pillow; gripping the sheets, tearing at them and wringing them in her hands. Her whole body writhed, shaken and tormented.

"Oh, go away," she cried. "Go away! Don't look at me!"

But Jane did not go. She stood there

by the bedside.

She had come to the end of her adventure. It was as if she had been brought there blindfold, carried past the border into the terrible, alien, unpenetrated lands. Her genius for exploration had never taken her within reasonable distance of them. She had turned back when the frontier was in sight, refusing all knowledge of the things that lay beyond. And here she was, in the very thick of it, at the heart of the unexplored, with her poor terrified eyes uncovered, her face held close to the thing she feared.

And yet she had passed through the initiation without terror; she had held her hand in the strange fire and it had not hurt her. She felt only a great penetrating, comprehending, incorruptible pity for her sister who writhed there, consumed and tortured in the

flame.

She knelt by the bedside and stretched out her arm and covered her, and Kitty lay still.

'You haven't gone," she said.

"No, Kitty."

Kitty moved; she sat up and put her hands to her loosened hair.

"I'll see him now," she said.

Kitty slid her feet to the floor. She stood up, steadying herself by the bed-

Jane looked at her and her heart was wrung with compassion.

"No," she said. "Wait till you're better. I'll tell him."

But Kitty was before her at the door,

leaning against it.

"I shall never be better," she said. Her smile was ghastly. She turned to Jane on the open threshold. "He hasn't got the children with him, has he? I don't want to see them.'

"You won't see them." "Can't he come to me?"

She peered down the passage, and drew back, and Jane knew that she was afraid of being seen.

"There's nobody about," she said, "they're all in the dining-room."

Still Kitty hesitated. "Will you come with me?" she said.

Then Jane took her hand and led her to the room where Robert was and left her with him.

He stood by the hearth, waiting for her. His head was bowed, but his eyes, as she entered, lifted and fixed themselves on her. There had gone from him that air of radiant and unconquerable youth, of innocence, expectant and alert. Instead of it he, too, wore the mark of experience, of initiation that had meant torture.

"I hope," he said, "you are rested." "Oh, yes."

She stood there, weak and drooping, leaning her weight on one slender hand, spread, palm downward, on the table.

He drew out a chair for her, and removed his own to the other side of the table, keeping that barrier between them. In his whole manner there was a terrible constraint.

"You've eaten nothing." he said.

Neither had he, she gathered, nor Jane. The trouble she had brought on them was jarring, dislocating, like the shock of bereavement. They had behaved as if in the presence of the beloved dead.

And yet, though he held himself apart, she knew that he had not sent for her to cast her off; that he was yet bound to her by the mysterious, infrangible tie; that he seemed to himself, in some way, her partner and accomplice.

Their silence was a link that bound

them; and she broke it.

"Well," she said, "you have some-

thing to say to me?"

"Yes." His hands, spread out on the table between them, trembled, "I have, only it seems so little-

"Does it? Well, of course, there isn't

much to be said."

"Not much. There aren't any words to- Only, I don't want you to think that I don't realize what you've done. It was magnificent."

He answered her look of stupefied in-

"Your courage, Kitty, in telling me the truth."

"Oh, that. Don't let's talk about it."

"I am not going to talk about it. But I want you to understand that what you told me has made no difference in my—in my feeling for you."

"It must."

"It hasn't. And it never will. And I want to know what we're going to do next."

"Next?" she repeated.

"Yes, next. Now."
"I'm going away. There's nothing else left for me to do."

"And I, Kitty? Do you think I'm going to let you go, without—"

She stopped him. "You can't help

yourself."

"What? You think I'm brute enough to take everything you've given me, and to—to let you go like this?"

His hands moved as if they would have taken hers and held them. Then he drew back,

"There's one thing I can't do for you, Kitty. I can't marry you, because it wouldn't be fair to my children."

"I know, Robert, I know."

"I know you know. I told you nothing would ever make any difference. If it wasn't for them I'd ask you to marry me to-morrow. I'm only giving you up, as you're giving me up, because of them. But, if I can't marry you I want you to let me make things a little less hard for you."

"How?"

"Well, for one thing, I don't believe you've anything to live on."

"What makes you think that?"

"Marston told me that if you married you forfeited your income. I suppose that meant that you had nothing of your own."

"It did."

"You've nothing?"

"My father would give me fifty pounds a year if I kept straight. But he can't afford it. It means that my little sisters go without dresses."

"And you've no home, Kitty?"

She shook her head. "They can't have me at home, you see."

He sighed.

"If I looked after you, Kitty, do you

think you would keep straight? If I made a home for you, somewhere, where you won't be too unhappy?"

"You mean you'd take care of me?"

"Yes. As far as I can."

Her face flushed deeply. "No," she said. "No. I mustn't let

you do that."
"Why not? It's nothing, Kitty. It's
the least that I can do. And you'd be
very lonely."

"I would. I would be miserable—in

between."

"Between?"

"When you weren't there."

"Kitty, dear child, I can't be there."

She shrank back, the flush died out of her face and left it white.

"I see. You didn't mean that I was to live with you?"

"Poor child-no."

"I—I didn't understand."
"No," he said gently, "no."

"You see how hopeless I am?"
"I see what my responsibility would

be if I left you to yourself."

"And—what do you want to do?"

"I want to provide for you and your

future."

"Dear Robert, you can't possibly provide—for either."

"I can. I've got a little house in the country, if you'll take it, and I can spare enough out of my income."

She smiled. "You can't afford it."
"If I could afford to marry I could afford that."

"I see. It's a beautiful scheme, Robert, And in the little house where I'm to live, will you come sometimes, and see me?"

"I think it would be better not."

"And what am I to do, if—if things are too hard for me? And if you are the only one?"

"Then you're to send for me."

"I see. I've only to send for you and you'll come?"

"Of course I'll come."

"When I can't bear it any longer am I to send for you?"

"You're to send for me when you're in any trouble, or any difficulty—or any danger."

"And the way out of the troubleand the difficulty—and the danger?"

"Between us we shall find the way." "No, Robert. Between us we shall lose it. And we shall never, never find it again."

"You can't trust me, Kitty?"

"I can't trust myself. I know how your scheme would work. I let you do this thing; I go away and live in the dear little house you'll give me; and I let you keep me there, and give me all my clothes and things. And you think that's the way to stop me thinking about you and caring for you? I shall be there, eating my heart out. What else can I do, when everything I put on or have about me reminds me of you, every minute of the day? I'm to look to you for everything, but never to see you until I can bear it no longer. How long do you think I shall bear it? A woman made like me? You know perfectly well what the trouble and the difficulty and the danger are. I shall be in it all the time. And some day I shall send for you and you'll come. Oh, yes, you'll come; for you'll be in it, too. It won't be a bit easier for you than it is for me.'

She paused.

"You'll come. And you know what the end of that will be.'

"You think no other end is possible between a man and a woman?

"If I do it's men who have made me think it."

"Have I, Kitty?"

"No. Not you. I don't say your plan wouldn't work with some other woman. I say it's impossible between you-and me.

"Because you won't believe that I might behave differently from some oth-

er men?"

"You are different. And I mean to keep you so."

She rose.

"There's only one way," she said. "We must never see each other again. We mustn't even think. I shall go away and you're not to come after

"When?"

"To-morrow. Perhaps to-night."

"And where, Kitty?"

"I don't know."

"You sha'n't go," he said. "I'll go. You must stay here until we can think of something.

She closed her eyes and drew a hard sigh, as if exhausted with the discus-

"Robert, dear, would you mind not talking any more to me? I'm very

"If I leave you will you go to bed and rest?

"I think so. You can say good night."

He rose and came toward her.

"No-don't say it," she cried. "Don't speak to me,"

She drew back and put her hands behind her as a sign that he was not to touch her.

He stood a moment looking at her. And as he looked at her he was afraid, even as she was. He said to himself that in that moment she was wise and had done well. For his heart hardly knew its pity from its passion, and its passion from its fear.

And she, seeing that she stood between him and the door, turned aside and made his way clear for him.

And so he left her.

CHAPTER XXI.

She stared at her own face in the glass without seeing it. Her brain was filled with the loud, hurried ticking of the clock. It sounded somehow as if it were out of gear. She felt herself swaying slightly as she stood.

She was not going to faint bodily. It seemed to her rather that the immaterial bonds, the unseen, subtle, intimate connections were letting go their hold. Her soul was the heart of the danger. It was there that the traveling powers of dissolution, accelerated, multiplying, had begun their work and would end it. Its moments were not measured by the ticking of the clock.

She had remained standing as Lucy had left her, with her back to the door he had gone out by. She was thus unaware that a servant of the hotel had come in, that he had delivered some message and was waiting for her an-

She started as the man spoke to her again. With a great effort her brain grasped and repeated what he had said.

"Mr. Marston."

No, she was certainly not going to faint. There was no receding of sensation. It was resurgence and invasion, violence shaking the very doors of life. She heard the light tremulous tread of the little pulses of her body, scattered by the ringing hammer-strokes of her heart and brain. She heard the clock ticking out of gear, like the small, irritable pulse of time.

She steadied her voice to answer. "Very well. Show him in."

Marston's face as he approached her was harder and stiffer than ever; his bearing more uncompromisingly upright and correct. He greeted her with that peculiar deference that he showed to women whose acquaintance he had yet to make. Decency required that he should start on a fresh and completely purified footing with the future Mrs. Robert Lucy.

"It's charming of you," he said, "to

let me come in.

"I wanted to see you, Wilfrid."

Something in her tone made him glance at her with a look that restored her for a moment to her former place.

"That is still more charming," he replied.

replied.

"I've done what you told me. I've

given-him up."

A heavy flush spread over his face and relaxed the hard tension of the muscles.

"I thought you'd do it."

"Well, I have done it." She paused. "That's all I had to say to you."

Her voice struck at him like a blow. But he bore it well, smiling his hard, reticent smile.

"I knew you'd do it," he repeated.
"But I didn't think you'd do it quite so soon. Why did you?"

"You know why."

"I didn't mean to put pressure on you, Kitty. It was your problem. Still,

I'm glad you've seen it in the right

"You think you made me see it?"
"I should hope you'd see it for your-

self. It was obvious."

"What was obvious?"
"The unsuitability of the entire arrangement. Was it likely you'd stick to it when you saw what you were in for?"

"You think I tired of him?"

"I think you saw possibilities of fatigue; and like a wise child you chucked it. It's as well you did it before instead of after. I say, how did Lucy take it?"

She did not answer. His smile flickered and died under the oppression of

her silence.

"Have you done with him altogether? He didn't suggest—er—any compromise?"

"He did not."

"He wouldn't. Compromise is for-

eign to his nature."

He sat leaning forward, contemplating with apparent satisfaction his own strong-grained, immaculate hands. From time to time he tapped the floor with a nervous movement of his foot.

"Then," he said presently, "if that's so there's no reason, is there, why you shouldn't come back to me?"

"I can't come back to you. I told

you so yesterday."

"Since yesterday the situation has altered considerably. Or rather, it remains precisely where it was before." "No, Wilfrid, Things can never be

as they were before."

"Why not? If I choose to ignore this episode, this little aberration on your part? You must be equally anxious to forget it. In which case we may consider our relations uninterrupted."

"Do you think I gave Robert Lucy

up to go back to you?'

"My dear Kitty, if I'm willing to take you back after you gave me up for him, I think my attitude almost constitutes a claim."

"A claim?"

"Well, let's say it entitles me to a hearing. You don't seem to realize in the least my extreme forbearance. I never reproached you. I never interfered between you and Lucy. You can't say I didn't play the game.

"I'm not saying it. I know you didn't

betray me."

"Betray you? My dear child, I helped you. I never dreamed of standing in your way as long as there was a chance of your marrying. Now that there is none-

"That has nothing to do with it. I told you that I wouldn't go back to you

in any case.'

"Come, I don't propose to throw you over for any other woman. Surely it would be more decent to come back to me than to go off with some other man, heaven knows whom, which is what you must do-eventually?"

"It's what I won't do. I'm not going back to that. Don't you see that's why

I won't go back to you?"

Her apathy had become exhaustion, The flat, powerless voice, dying of its own utterance, gave him a sense of things past and done with, sunk into the ultimate oblivion. No voice of her energy and defiance could have touched him so. Her indifference troubled him like passion; in its completeness, its finality, it stirred him to decision, to acceptance of its terms. She was ready to fall from his grasp by her own dead weight. There was only one way in which he could hold her.

"Kitty," he said, "is that really why

you won't come back?"

That's why. "Yes. Anything-

anything but that."

"I see. You're tired of it? And you want to give it up? Well, I'm not sure that I don't want you to."

"Then why," she moaned, "why won't you let me go?"

"Simply because I can't."

He came and sat close to her. He leaned his face to hers and spoke thick and low.

"You can't give it up, dear. You're

bound to go back."

"No-no-no. Don't talk about it." "I won't. I won't ask you to go back. But I can't do without you."

"Oh, yes, you can. There are other

"I loathe them all. I wouldn't do for one of them what I'll do for you.'

"What will you do for me?" "I'll marry you, Kitty."

She laughed in her tired fashion. "You want to make an honest woman of me, do you?"

"No. I think I'm endeavoring to make myself an honest man. If you give Lucy up for me I don't want you to lose by the transaction. You were to have been married. But for me, perhaps, you would have been. Very well, I'll marry you.'

"And that," she said, "will make it

all right?"

"Well-won't it?"

"No, it won't. How could it?"

"You know how. It will help you to keep straight. That's what you want, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes, that's what I want. And you think I'll keep straight by marry-

ing you?"

"I won't swear to it. But I know it's ten to one that you'll go to the devil if you don't marry me. And you say you don't want to do that."

"I don't want—to marry you." He shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps not-but even marrying me might

be better than the other alternative. "It wouldn't," she cried. "It would be worse. If I married you I couldn't get away from you. I couldn't get away from it. You'd keep me in it. It's what you like me for—what you're marrying me for. You haven't married all these years because you can't stand living with a decent woman. And you think, if I marry you, it will make it all right. All right!"

She rose and defied him. "Why, I'd rather be your mistress. Then I could get away from you. I shall get away

now.

She turned violently and he leaped up and caught her in his arms. She struggled, beating upon his breast and crying with a sad, inarticulate cry. She would have sunk to the floor if he had not kept his hold of her.

He raised her, and she stood still, breathing hard, while he still grasped

her tightly by the wrists.

"Let me go," she said faintly. "Where are you going to?"

"I don't know."

"You've no money. If you're not going back what are you going to do?"

"I don't know."

Her eyelids dropped, and he saw mendacity in her eyes' furtive fleeing under cover. He held her tighter. His arm shook her, not brutally, but with a nervous movement that he was powerless to control.

"You lie," he said. "You've been lying to me all the time. You are going back. You're going to that fellow Lucy."

"No. I'm going-somewhere-where I sha'n't see him.

"Where?"

"I don't know." "Abroad?"

"I think so." "By yourself?"

Her eyelids quivered, and she panted. "Yes.

There was a knock at the door. "Let me go," she said again.

He let her go.

"You're going to live-by yourselfrespectably-abroad?"

She was silent.

"And how long do you think that will last?"

"I don't know."

Jane Lucy's voice called her from the door. He swore under his breath.

"Let her come in. I want her." He laid his hand upon the door. "What are you going to do?" he re-

"Oh, let her come to me."

"You haven't answered my question." "Let me see her first. Leave me alone

with her."

"Very well."

He opened the door and bowed to Jane Lucy as she entered.

"I shall come back," he said, "for my answer."

CHAPTER XXII.

"Did Robert send you?" she asked when she was alone with Jane. "Yes.

"It's no good. I can't do what he

"What are you going to do, dear?" "I don't know. I don't care. The terrible thing is that I've had to hurt him. I must go away somewhere."

"I'll come with you and see you

through."

Kitty shook her head.

"Don't think about it now," said

"No. I can't think. I'm too tired, and my head's hot. But if I go away you'll understand why I did it?"

"Kitty"-Jane whispered it-"you

won't go back?

"No. I won't go back. You won't have to think that of me.'

She had not looked at Jane as they talked. Now she turned to her with

eves of anguish and appeal.

"Janey-think. I've been wicked for years and years. I've only been good for one moment. One moment-when I gave Robert up. Do you think it'll count?"

"I think that, in the sight of God,

such moments last forever.

"And that's what you'll think of me

She lifted up her face, haggard and white, flame-spotted where her tears had scorched it. Jane kissed it. "Do you mind kissing me?"

"My dear, my dear," said Jane, and

she drew her closer.

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage. Kitty drew back and listened.

"Where's Robert?"

"Up-stairs with the children."

"They'll be asleep by this time, won't they?'

"Fast asleep."

The footsteps came again, approaching the door. They paused outside it a

moment and turned back.

"Do you hear that?" said Kitty. "It's Wilfrid Marston walking up and down. He wants to get hold of me. I think he's mad about me. He asked me to marry him just now, and I wouldn't. He thinks I didn't mean it, and he's coming back for his answer. But I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I shall

go out quietly by the window, and slip away, and he won't find me. I want you to be here when he comes and tell him that he can't see me. Would you mind doing that?"

"No."

"You'll stay here all the time, and you won't let him go out and look for me?"

"Yes."

Kitty listened again for the footsteps. "He's still there," she whispered. "And you'll go to bed, Kitty?"

"Yes. Of course I will."

She went out through the window on to the veranda, and so into the gar-

It was cool out there and unutterably peaceful, with a tender, lucid twilight on the bare grass of the lawn, on the sea beyond it, and on the white gravelpath by the low wall between. She saw it, the world that had held her and Robert, that, holding them, had taken on the ten days' splendor of their passion. It stood, divinely still in the perishing violet light, a world withdrawn and unsubstantial, yet piercingly, intolerably near.

Indoors Jane waited. It was not yet the half-hour. She waited till the clock struck and Marston came for his an-

He looked round the room, and his face, under its deference, betraved his sharp annoyance at finding himself alone with Miss Lucy.

"Pardon me," he said. "I thought

that Mrs. Tailleur was here."

"Mrs. Tailleur asked me to tell you that she cannot see you. She has gone to her room."

"To her room?"

He stared at her and his face loosened in a sudden incredulity and dis-

"Did she tell you she was going there?"

"Yes. She was very tired."

"But-she was here not half an hour ago. She couldn't have gone without my seeing her."

"She went out," said Jane faintly,

"by the window."

"She couldn't get to her room with-

out going through the hall. I've been there all the time, on the seat by the stairs."

They looked at each other. The seat by the stairs commanded all ways in and out, the entrance of the passage, and the door of the sitting-room, and the portière of the lounge.

What do you think?" he said.

"I think that she has not gone far. But if she goes it is you who will have driven her away.'

"Forgive me if I remind you that it

is not I who have given her up."
"It was you," said Jane quietly,

"who helped to ruin her."

His raised eyebrows expressed an urbane surprise at the curious frankness of her charge. And with a delicate gesture of his hand he repudiated it and waved it away.

"My dear lady, you are alarmed and you are angry, consequently you are unjust. Whatever poor Kitty may have

done I am not responsible.

"You are responsible. It's you, and men like you, who have dragged her down. You took advantage of her weakness, of her very helplessness. You've made her so that she can't believe in a man's goodness and trust herself to it."

He smiled, still with that untroubled urbanity, on the small flaming thing as

she arraigned him.

"And you consider me responsible for that?" he said.

"My brother is Their eyes met. here," said she. "Would you like to see him?"

"It might be as well, perhaps. If you

can find him.'

She left him and he waited five min-

utes, ten minutes, twenty.

She returned alone. All her defiance had gone from her, and the face that she turned to him was white with fear.

"She is not here," she said. "She went out-by that window-and she has not come in. We've searched the hotel and we can't find her."

"And you have not found your brother?"

"He has gone out to look for her." She sat down by the table, turning her face away and screening it from

him with her hand.

Marston gave one look at her. He stepped out, and crossed the lawn to the bottom of the garden. The gate at the end of the path there swung open violently, and he found himself face to face with Robert Lucy.

"What have you done with Mrs.

Tailleur?" he said.

Lucy's head was sunk upon his breast. He did not look at him nor answer. The two men walked back in silence up the lawn.

"You don't know where she is?" said

Marston presently.

"No. I thought I did. But—she is

not there."

He paused, steadying his voice to

speak again.

"If I don't find her I shall go up to town by the midnight train. Can you give me her address there?"

"You think she has gone up to town?" Marston spoke calmly. He was appeased by Lucy's agitation and his manifest ignorance as to Kitty's movements.

"There's nothing else she could do. I've got to find her. Will you be good enough to give me her address?"

"My dear Mr. Lucy, there's really no reason why I should. If Mrs. Tailleur has not gone up to town her address won't help you. If she has gone your discreetest course by far, if I may say so—""

"Is what?" said Lucy sternly.

"Why, my dear fellow, of course—to let her go."

Lucy raised his head. "I do not intend," he said, "to let her go."

"Nor I," said Marston.

"Then we've neither of us any time to lose. I won't answer for what she may do, in the state she's in."

Marston swung slightly round, so that he faced Lucy with his imperturba-

ble stare.

"If you'd known Mrs. Tailleur as long as I have you'd have no sort of doubt as to what she'll do."

Lucy did not appear to have heard

him, so sunk was he in his own thoughts,

"What was that?" said Marston suddenly.

They listened. The gate of the cliff path creaked on its hinges and fell back with a sharp click of the latch. Lucy turned and saw a small woman's figure entering the garden from the cliff. He strode on toward the house, unwilling to be observed and overtaken by any guests of the hotel.

Marston followed him slowly, pon-

dering at each step of the way.

He heard footsteps, quick stumbling footsteps, and a sound like a hoarse half-suffocating breath behind him. Then a woman's voice, that sank, stumbling, like the footsteps, as it spoke.

"Mr. Lucy," it said, "is it you?"

Marston went on.

Lucy was in the room with his sister. He was sitting with his back to the open window as Marston came in by it.

The voice outside was nearer; it whispered: "Where is Mr. Lucy?"

"Somebody's looking for you, Lucy," said Marston.

And the three turned round.

Mrs. Hankin stood in the window, holding on to the frame of it and trembling. Her face, her perfect face, was gray, like the face of an old woman. It was drawn and disfigured with some terrible emotion.

Lucy went to her. She clung to his arm, and held him on the threshold.

"Mrs. Tailleur," she said, "Mrs. Tailleur. We found her—down there. She's killed. She—she fell from the cliff"

The three stood still as she spoke to

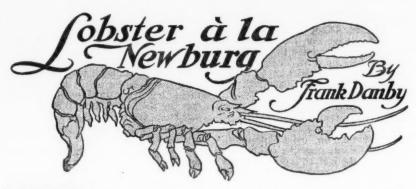
them.

Then Jane rushed forward to her brother with a cry, and Mrs. Hankin stretched out her arms and barred the

There were small spots of blood on her hands and on her dress where she

had knelt.

"Go back, child," she said. "They're carrying her in."





EDDA LEWERS received the letter the next morning after it was written. It certainly gave her a fair insight into Joan's mental condition, and she was satisfied at finding her prognosis

had been correct.

DEAR HEDDA: My love-affair has ended beautifully; I have left my husband, and Aubyn St. Clair and I are together. I suppose if I did not know your innate want of conventionality, and your cultivated contempt of conventional morality, I should not write to you at the present juncture.

I haven't written to Vera, because I know her better than she knows herself, and I am sure, at the present moment, with all her affected cynicism, she is crying, and wishing she had done some impossible thing or other, that was quite out of her power, to prevent the catastrophe. She will look upon it as a catastrophe, but at present—you see, I know my physiology will interest you—I can only look upon it as a disappointment.

The potential possession of Aubyn was exquisite, but it stultifies emotion when details obtrude themselves, and Aubyn is full of details. He wants to know where we are going from here, what we shall call ourselves, when I shall get my clothes—he wants to know all sorts of things. I am afraid he will turn out a bad traveler, or at least a fussy one.

Now, William had his faults, but he did understand going about comfortably. And I miss Annie. When you've had a good maid for four years it is wonderful how you depend upon her. I suppose I am awfully excited, perhaps if I were not I shouldn't be writing to you. What ought I to be doing, I wonder? What would a heroine of remance be doing? Here I am in Aubyn St.

Clair's smoky sitting-room in Marlboro' Street, waiting while he "makes arrangements." He has asked me ever so many questions that I can't answer. I have never run away before, how am I to know how to do it, where we ought to go, or anything?

But there is a distinct under-tremor of excitement upon me. I am quite enjoying myself, I think. And there is really a touch of romance in me, too, Hedda, because I find I want to go somewhere, at once, immediately, to-night. I wish Aubyn understood this without my explaining it to him. I've told him I don't care for anything; but that I must be in a train. I have always pictured running away in a train, you can't run away in Marlboro' Street.

He says: Isn't it enough that we are together? I'm afraid it isn't. I wish he had had more experience, or a thought more brains. He is very good-looking, but I wish he understood environment, or me. I want to be in the middle of the spring, where it is budding and green, and there are trees and sky, and above all things, water.

sky, and above all things, water.

If I were to wake up to-morrow morning and still see chimney-pots, I believe I should wish myself back with William. I want to rush, to be always moving. I never meant to crawl away. I want everything about me to be new and strange and rare.

But still, don't you envy me? I'm off the track, out of the way of morning-callers, I have become "that sort of person." Every now and then I get cold and shivery and excited, and then hot all over. I never thought I was so emotional.

I will telegraph you my address as soon as Mr. St. Clair decides upon my having one. Write and tell me what every one says. What a treat it is to have a friend like you. I hear his step in the next room, it makes all the blood rush into my face and all my pulses throb. I am in love.

Here the letter left off abruptly. "Joan is modern," Hedda said to herself, with a sigh of satisfaction, as she

folded up the letter. "She isn't merely contemporary. She has left that intelligent, straightforward, excellent husband of hers, whom she thoroughly likes and appreciates, simply to indulge in a new sensation, merely because she was tired of ordering dinner every day and visiting her neighbors. But chiefly, perhaps, to prove to me that I was wrong when I said she had a suburban mind. I am glad I repeated that to her," said Hedda thoughtfully, as she put the letter away, preparatory to disseminating the news of the elopement at a series of afternoon-calls.

Hedda was glad her new dress was home from the tailor's, and that her hat matched it. Hedda Lewers was a woman capable of infinite self-satisfaction in small things; she was an older woman than the runaway Joan, more analytical, and less esthetic. Her corruptness was slenderly motived; she was plain and nearly forty, her husband was not even rich, and she had scrupulously abstained from the joys of motherhood. She influenced her friends to live three-volumed novels, and embroidered verbally on their life-pages, or passages, with unremitting zest.

Joan was her most intimate friend, a clever young woman eight-and-twenty, and restless. She had written an immature tadpole novel when she was twenty-one; at twenty-three she had married a well-to-do solicitor, and settled down in West Hampstead.

Unfortunately the novel had been something of a success; it was as young as the authoress, vivid and somewhat scandalous. She had lived it down, she was happy in her marriage and circumstances, until Hedda Lewers had persuaded her that she was growing commonplace. It was Hedda who managed to convince her of her boredom with the petty domestic trials and duties that began with the cook's extravagance and ended with the parlormaid's wanting to go to church on a Sunday.

Aubyn St. Clair came back into his room just as Joan's pen lay idle in her hand, and she was watching the rapidity of her heart-beats at the sound of

his footsteps. She did not want to overdo it, she kept her emotions well in hand, she intended to enjoy and understand every moment of her new experience without that penalty of pain from which the unanalytically emotional have to suffer. So she pressed both her hands over her heart to note its beats when her lover kneeled down beside her and would have put his arms about her.

"Oh, Joan, Joan, darling," he said, "I am so happy, tell me you are as happy as I am, tell me you will never regret it, never be sorry because of to-day. My darling, I am so happy."

His voice broke, his soft eyes were limpid with the tears his manhood suppressed, his quivering lips, flushed face, and moist trembling hands testified to his excitement.

Joan accepted his embrace reluctantly, she was keenly sensitive that his hands were moist. She loved him better a little distance off; nevertheless there had been a certain excitement in letting him kiss her for the first time. She had quite known how wrong and wicked it was, how unfair to William.

That was last week, while her intentions were maturing. She had spent all her days and nights since then watching for the thrill of his kisses, hoping for it, imagining it. It was for that she had left her husband, whose kisses were thrill-less. But this afternoon, this afternoon of all others, Aubyn St. Clair's kisses did not move her at all! She felt it must be the surroundings that damped her enthusiasm. "Well," she said to him quickly, in

the midst of the embrace, "where are we going? When do we start?" "Tell me you are as happy as I am.

You love me intensely, let me hear you say it."

"You know I love you," she answered impatiently.

"Yes, yes," feverishly. "but I want to hear you say it. Would you be satisfied if I did not tell you every minute, every hour, all you are to me? But I could never tell you, you can never know how I love you. Joan, put your arms about me, put your cheek down against mine, tell me, darling, don't be

afraid now"-he grew dramatic-"now, that we are all the world to each other, now"-his lips clung to her ear as he whispered it-"now that you belong to me.

She flushed under his words, resenting them in some odd way. Nevertheless she had to play her part.

"Oh, that's all right."

But his mustache tickled her, and her evanescent emotion was complete and passed, while his was still at its height and he could not loose her or speak. Joan's sense of humor was interfering seriously with her enjoyment, she felt acutely the inappropriateness of her physical discomfort, through such a trifle as the curled end of his mustache in the sensitive calyx of her ear.

Fortunately Aubyn St. Clair, although he had had no experience in elopements, had an artistic touch in love-making. He had hardly expected she would have consented so quickly to come away with him. She understood him so well, played his accompaniments perfectly. He knew from Mrs. Lewers that she had eight hundred pounds a year of her own.

"My darling is shy with me," he said, loosing her, standing up and look-

ing at her tenderly.

The last gleams of the setting February sun glowed through the murky window into the brown of his eyes and the red copper of his curly hair. Joan's real passion, a sense of the beautiful, grew strong within her as she looked.

It broke into words.

"Don't move, Aubyn, don't move. If you stand like that I know I am in love with you, or even if you moved gracefully, slowly, but not out of the line of the window. You fill the room for me. and all the brightness of the atmosphere concentrates itself in you. It is not only your hair and your eyes and your skin, although it is a wonderful skin for a man-positively it has a bloom upon it; it is your figure and your pose, your well-shaped hands, the way you move. Aubyn, I know I've run away with you, but we could get back in time for dinner, and I know William wouldn't mind. Tell me now, tell me before it is too late." She went to him this time, put her hands on his shoulder and looked into his deep soft eyes. "Do I love you? Is this love? To me you are perfectly beautiful, but"-vehemently-"if you had a stye on your eye, or a black on your nose, you would be nothing to me, less than nothing. I should dislike you. Aubyn, shall we go on? I really feel this.'

It was her first, last, only appeal to him, and it was barely genuine. Weakness appeals to strength; Joan never thought her lover strong, her senses reveled in his beauty and scented cleanliness, that was all. And she was so tired of the daily domestic round. It was a wonderful experience; she had written, but she had never lived; this

was living.

Aubyn St. Clair was a musical-comedy tenor with aspirations. He was intelligent, for a musician; and Joan's broad brow and ingenuousness, her untheatrical freshness, skill as an accompanist, and admiration for him, had fed his vanity to passion point. And then there was the added attraction of her stable income. Since their first meeting nearly a month ago at the Lewers' dinner-party, he had pursued her acquaintance untiringly, dined, lunched, and loafed at Lancaster Road.

William Jakers had been almost as proud of Joan's conquest as if he had been her mother, and Aubyn St. Clair an eligible suitor. But then he knew he and his wife were quite happy together, and he failed to fathom the full eccentricities of her moral character. The young couple had had full opportunities of meeting. William Jakers' trust was complete. Joan had spent a day at Richmond with the singer, had gazed at him during innumerable rehearsals, and compromised herself with him as publicly as she was able.

The syndicate that was running the Lycidian Theater failed to make it pay, and closed abruptly. Aubyn St. Clair rushed as fast as the twopenny tube and extension permitted to Hampstead for consolation. The consolation was given him, and tea; songs followed, and in a passionate musical moment, irradiated by firelight and compassion, they had decided suddenly life were im-

possible apart.

When they had driven to Aubyn's chambers in Marlboro' Street, Joan expected the impulse that had led her from husband and home to be permanent. It had lasted through a rapturous ten minutes as the hansom dashed through the green Hampstead spring; it cooled in the damp muddiness of the Edgeware Road; vanished in the commonplace bustle of Oxford Street; and was lost amidst the omnibuses of Regent Circus.

The bare stone staircase and liftless flights of the Marlboro' Chambers had not revived it, and since their arrival there, while Jack went to order dinner, after having brought her position home to her by going into details as to their next movements, her emotions were all in abeyance, and her humor and intelligence were fully awake. She wrote her letter to Hedda Lewers while she waited, the mere writing of it making her action clear.

Joan's instincts were dainty, feminine, sensuous; Aubyn St. Clair's rooms were plain, there was a lack of luxuriousness, of beauty, almost of comfort about them, and she was chilled. When he was with her his raptures left her cool, and her burst of admiration was an affectation, a literary insincerity.

"My darling," he answered her, with the confidence of his success, "of course you love me, love me as I love you, but"—and once more his arms were about her and she was lying on his breast—"you hardly know yourself yet. You are so good. You don't understand your own feelings. You—"
"He imagines I have a passion for

"He imagines I have a passion for him," thought Joan, her head pressed against his heart. "I wonder if I have! He is really handsome, much better looking than William."

She lost the thread of what he was saying, yielding herself nevertheless to his kisses. Her thoughts ran on:

"I feel like the heroine of 'Une Vie.'
I feel like saying 'Is that all?'"

A knock at the door caused them to loose each other abruptly. Aubyn had to open it himself. His two rooms, separated by the bathroom, joined by a narrow passage, led straight on to the stone stairs. He had no servant, his chambers were served from the basement. Joan felt forlorn and cut off from humanity so high up; she had never before been to a man's rooms, and she was shivering internally; leather chairs and threadbare carpet, dirty play-bills, portraits of actresses, of Aubyn St. Clair; the absence of cushions, curtains, softness, scent, formed an atmosphere in which her love could not expand.

While he replied to the knock she looked around her again. "How hideous to dine here," she thought, "hideous! The dinner will be plain, boiled, overdone, chilly, Aubyn will be rapturous, and after dinner—Oh!" She made a mental grimace. "I shall be expected to be rapturous, too. And I haven't a tea-gown with me; if I had, I couldn't put it on by myself; and I couldn't travel in it; and I will travel,

I am determined to travel."

Aubyn came back with flushed face and moist eyes, an open telegram in his hand:

"Oh, my darling, read this. What am I to do? It is a wonderful opportunity—but how can I—you wouldn't wait here—you wouldn't——"

Joan took the open telegram from

him.

Sant taken ill. Can you sing Faust tonight, Covent Garden. Prince will be there. HARRIS.

"It is a wonderful opportunity, a terribly unfortunate coincidence." He was looking at her eagerly. "I have always wanted a chance in grand opera, an occasion like this, you know! The prince, and the German emperor, and everybody will be there! It would be the making of me, but of course if you think that—"

Joan was immediately sympathetic. Sympathy was her strong point.

"You must not miss it," she said decisively; "not on any account. It would be madness, madness!"

"You darling, you are ambitious for me; it is only for you I want to do it, to be worthy of you. If I were to get good notices over this I could make my own terms with Edwards over the next engagement, even if I remained on the lyric stage. But I don't think I shall. We can dine together, at least——" He pulled himself up, and looked at the clock. "I mustn't eat anything."

Then he went up to Joan, and put his arms about her. She responded with almost hysterical warmth; there were

tears in both their eyes.

"How I shall sing to-night! You will be waiting for me at home, here! I shall owe my whole career to you. But how can I leave you? Oh, Joan, I have never felt as I do to-night. If you could only hear me! But there are no boxes left, every one would see you, there is no time to arrange anything. You will wait for me here. Darling, darling, how I shall count the minutes until I come back to you! And youyou send me, you want me to go, don't you, darling? We will read about it together in the morning. It is too wonderful! Now that we belong to each other, that I am so completely yours, I want to succeed more than I ever wanted to for myself."

And he believed every word he ut-

tered.

"You ought to go and dress, you ought to be there early. I will write the answer to the telegram for you—don't waste time." She was eager, she almost pushed him away from her.

She wrote with steady hand:

Will take part, be with you seven forty-five.

AUBYN ST. CLAIR.

In less than half an hour she was surprised to find herself alone, alone in Aubyn St. Clair's rooms. She had promised him that she would eat some dinner, she would order supper for him. She went from the sitting-room to the bedroom, and even inspected the bathroom, little cold rills running down her back, strange and lonely and surprised at her position.

"Not seven yet, he won't be back until eleven, or past—how am I to get through the hours? I can't dine here alone—I wish I hadn't ordered that lobster à la Newburg for William. I wish I had a tea-gown here. I wish I hadn't written to Hedda, then I could do that now—I could write her a better letter now. What a pity Aubyn has taken mine to post. What a wretched lookout!" The windows gave on to the Marlboro' Street police station. "I never thought Aubyn could be content to live in a place like this."

Every moment the dull walls and evening seemed closing more wretchedly and forlornly around her; her unfed sensuousness dying of sheer inanition, her thoughts going forth more and more definitely to her Hampstead home, curtained and cushioned and feminine.

"I don't believe Aubyn has ever had these rooms papered; they look as if they were 'done up' by the landlord. What an idiotic pattern, and what a bilious green! I hate a leather sofa, leather of all materials!" She tried it. "It is almost as slippery as horsehair. I can't lie down in my stays, I hate not being able to have my boots off. What on carth shall I do with myself?"

She grew momentarily more discontented. Nurtured amid all the physical comforts of the middle classes, soft and enervated in every fiber, an unreasonable, unreasoning irritation seized upon her as she paced restlessly up

and down.

"How he will swagger to-night over their sending for him! What a genius he will think himself! How endlessly he will talk about it!"

Another knock at the door, and this time Joan had to answer it herself. A slipshod grinning servant stood there.

"Mr. St. Clair said as how you would dine here, and missis wants to know when you'll be wantin' it."

"Not at all," said Joan sharply.

What sort of a dinner could such a slattern bring her? "Have a nice hot supper ready for your master at eleven," she ordered.

"But Mr. St. Clair said vou would dine in," persisted the girl, gazing at Joan with stupid open-mouthed curi-

osity.

"He made a mistake," was the abrupt answer. "Go away. Shut the door."

A quick thought had risen in her

mind.

"What fun it would be to go home and dine with William. I should only be a quarter of an hour late, and he is sure to have waited. I can make myself thoroughly comfortable, and be back before 'Faust' is over. It is a pity to miss that lobster!"

But it was not only the dish, it was all the other material comforts of home, the luxuries and the feminineness, that rose before her.

She seized the pen again:

My Darling Aubyn: I have gone home to dinner with William. I hate dining alone, and so does he; it seems selfish to stay here alone and keep him waiting for nothing. I do hope you are having an immense success, I envy all the people who are seeing you, and listening to you. Darling, good-by.

She really had not made up her mind whether to come back or not to come back; she would be guided by impulse, it depended on what humor she found William. Every moment William became more definite in her mind, and Aubyn St. Clair more unreal. It took her but a minute to put on her coat and bonnet; veil and gloves she carried in her hands. She hurried down the stone stair, drew in a long breath of satisfaction as she reached the cool street, hailed a hansom joyously, and directed him Hampsteadward with a smile.

The smile deepened and broadened all through the long drive. Subconsciously she realized she had had her experience, and bought it cheaply, comparatively for nothing. She felt a new rush of tenderness for William. Another woman going home after an experience such as hers might have felt nervous, uncertain as to her reception, but William was so good. He did not under-stand her, he was really quite ordi-nary, he thought she was happy and content. Hedda said—after all, Hedda was not bound to be right. Joan thought tenderly of her husband as she drove homeward to him, through the emptying streets in the evening air. She was so glad she was going home, she reveled sensuously in every detail of her return, the fire in her bedroom, her

evening slippers, the ease of her teagown, the silver and the flowers of the dinner-table.

And it all came true, no disappointment awaited her. William had come home late and had gone up-stairs to dress. Jane, the parlor-maid who opened the door, smiled her welcome, and went out to pay the cab. Annie, her maid, had the tea-gown and shoes ready, and was waiting in the firelit bedroom, pink and luxurious in the lamp-light.

William called out from the dressing-

room to wish her good evening.

"I am glad you were late," he said through the open door. "I thought you would scold me. I went to have my hair cut, on the way from the City. I shall be ready for dinner in ten minntes."

He did not even ask her where she had been!

"Why don't you have your hair cut in the morning?" she answered cheerily. "The dinner will be spoiled, and cook will be in a rage."

Then a humorous thought struck her, and through the open dressing-room door she talked loudly.

"I suppose you don't feel like going out to-night?"

"Why not?" answered William laconically, struggling with his necktie,

"Because I should so like to hear 'Faust' to-night at Covent Garden. Aubyn St. Clair is taking Sant's part."

William was dressed by this time, and came to her; a thick-set, brown-whis-kered business man, with squared toed boots, and a good heart.

"I don't mind," he said good-humoredly. "I want something to brush the business cobwebs out of my brain. But you can't go in that thing," indicating the longed-for tea-gown.

"Oh, yes, I can, my opera-cloak will cover it. Hurry down and ring for dinner, will you? I sha'n't be a minute; we shall be awfully late as it is."

She seemed quite happy and excited over the prospect, kissed William, and said he was a dear to take her, and would not listen to his assurance that he was going to please himself as well as her.

"You spoil me," she said, "you are awfully good. I do want to hear him

in 'Faust.' "

"It's quite a flirtation between you," he answered in high good humor, "but I don't mind an outing myself. A little good music has an excellent effect on the digestion. I haven't been quite the thing all day. The curry was very good last night, but a little rich perhaps."

William Jakers' digestion stood next to his wife in his affectionate interest, and patent medicines were his only personal extravagance. But it seemed quite an endearing trait to Joan tonight. And in the highest spirits she discussed his liver in a light vein of humor all through the five courses. But she was inwardly in a fever of impatience, a fever that grew higher and higher.

"How would Aubyn look when he saw her with William? What would

he think?"

Joan had a wonderful evening. Aubyn St. Clair from the stage, with the possibilities between them, sang right into her heart, and thrill after thrill responded to him. The color came and went in her cheeks, and the thrills seemed to penetrate the very core of her being. She had her fill of emotion.

She was grateful to William, the warm security of his presence in the cab completed her sense of a delightful evening. Vague and unformulated in words, but quite definitely, it came to her that it was this that was life; the Aubyn St. Clairs and what they brought was merely literature. Her hand lay in her husband's nearly all the way home.

She went to sleep almost as soon as she got into bed. But she woke in an hour, suddenly and in terror, with her heart beating painfully, and a sense of impending calamity full upon her. The sledge-hammer beats of her heart and pulses, the tremor of fear that was upon her, the short painful breath, and limb paralysis were as a black veil between her and thought.

Then there flashed across the blackness the remembrance of her letter to

Hedda.

"My wife is a woman of moods," William Jakers was in the habit of saying proudly, as if her inconsistencies and unreliability were estimable qualities. He never fathomed the mood that led her to wake him that night, her remorseful affection, and restless incoherent self-reproaches.

"It is the lobster à la Newburg," he said soothingly. And in the suggestion of remedies and rejection of them, Joan

grew gradually calm.

Hedda Lewers' projected round of visits was cut short by a telegram that reached her before she had finished her housekeeping.

Letter a joke, coming to lunch with you, Joan.

Joan had escaped dire disaster; nevertheless she paid the penalty for her escapade. But that is another story, one that Hedda is never tired of relating, a penalty of pertinacious pleading and pursuit, of scenes and recriminations, and finally of blackmail. After all, it was William who had to write the last chapter, with a horsewhip; and notwithstanding his lack of literary ability, it was done vigorously and efficaciously.







ERE is an amusing story which illustrates the hold that bridge whist sometimes gets on its devotees.

During a recent yacht-race at Newport, Colonel J. J. Astor took out a party

of friends on his steam-yacht, the *Nour-mahal*. In the party were the late Commodore Kane and some enthusiastic yachtsmen, as well as Mrs. Astor and a few feminine bridge lovers.

These latter promptly sat down in the lower cabin, and began challenging the goddess, Fortuna. As the magnificent sloops jibed around the first mark, the commodore put his head down one of the hatches and shouted: "They are turning—they are turning!"

His remark left the bridge-players quite unmoved, and there was, in the vulgar parlance of the day, "nothing Luncheon was soon announced, and immediately after this the card-tables were brought out for a renewal of the contest. At the finish of the yacht-race, which was a close one, the commodore, thinking it a pity that so fine a sight should altogether escape the ladies, again begged them to come up, and added: "It's a wonderful finish—you really must see it." Again a tense silence from the cabin and again the commodore was in despair.

Finally, when the race was over and the gigs, full of the guests, were approaching the yacht-club dock, some friends on shore called out excitedly: "Who won?" To which one of the ladies shouted back: "Oh! Alice did, of course! She held every ace in the pack."

I was at Newport myself that summer, and it was there that I witnessed one of the most wonderful runs of bad luck I have ever seen at bridge.

Baron A., an Italian, and one of the finest players it has ever been my good fortune to meet, was being worsted in a set rubber with three second-class players. The baron and Mr. N. had been challenged by Mr. W. and Mr. F. The latter, in less than five hours' play, won eleven consecutive rubbers. They cut the deal and the seats every time. Their rubbers were, all but one of them, fairly large ones; and they each pocketed one hundred and eighteen dollars at five-cent points, or a little over ten dollars for every rubber played. Some of the rubbers must have taken less than fifteen minutes to play. was at a near-by table and, while I was dummy, went over occasionally and watched the progress of the match. The Baron played faultlessly, while I should say that W. and F. "chucked" ten tricks in every rubber, but their cards were crowding in upon them and they could not lose.

It would be interesting to get exact figures about runs of luck at bridge. I have myself, in three days' time, won thirteen consecutive rubbers, but I doubt if I ever won more than eight at one sitting. I have often heard that, on one occasion, Mr. V. at the Racquet Club in New York won twenty-seven consecutive rubbers, but I am not prepared to say that these figures are cor-

rect.

Such a run of luck as this would be little short of marvelous. Let us, for instance, suppose that the three hundred million people who inhabit Europe were to enter a bridge tournament in which every couple was to play a rubber and drop out as soon as they were defeated, the winners keeping on. After twenty-seven rounds of such a tournament there would be only one player left. In other words it is, in betting parlance, three hundred million to one against a man's winning twenty-seven consecutive rubbers.

But after all, such a run of luck as this is perfectly possible! The red recently came up at a Monte Carlo roulette-wheel thirty-six times in succession. Why should not the cards behave

as strangely as the marble?

While I am on the question of luck, I feel that I must instance the worst run of bad luck which I have ever brown.

Three years ago Mr. C. used to play regularly at the Union Club in New York. He played every week-day afternoon—and must have averaged about three hours' play. He never played for more or less than ten-cent points, the club stakes at the Union.

Between the first of September and the fifth of April-seven months-he lost a little over eight thousand dollars. At the time, it is true, he was not a first-class player, but few of his adversaries were, either. He has since improved his game and is to-day, I think, a fairly consistent player. His average loss was about forty dollars a day, or four hundred points, or two rubbers of two hundred points each. He figured that he played about six rubbers a day. of which he lost four. He assures me that he kept his bridge accounts very accurately and that he could not be wrong about the figures.

To show how much money skill will save a man at bridge, I have only to point out that, had Mr. C. played well enough to win, every day, one of his losing rubbers, he would have come out even on his bridge, instead of losing eight thousand dollars in a little over seven months. Had he been able to

do this he would have won and lost three rubbers a day.

Some good players are, curiously enough, consistent losers. It seems as though destiny had decided to work perpetually against them. They play hand after hand perfectly, make it correctly, and take advantage of every error on their adversaries' part; but all to no avail—they seem bound to lose.

I have in mind Mr. J. W. H., who is certainly one of the best players in New York, and who is, and has been for years, a steady loser at the game. Captain Lee-Barber, one of the most adroit and brilliant bridgers in London, and probably the best of the military players in England, told me that he had not won at the game for three years. Mr. Dalton, who writes about bridge so entertainingly in the English magazines and who was, at one time, a very great player, has had to come down to pennies as he found his losses at sixpenny bridge mounted up to too high a figure. He now sticks to the smaller points and plays almost entirely at Almack's Club, about which club I feel that I really must say a word or two in pass-

Almack's used to be, in the olden days, a fashionable dancing-club, as Thackeray has made us remember. It is now devoted exclusively to bridge. It is a proprietary club—owned by a syndicate of five people and managed by a lady and a gentleman who run the club admirably and who are always about the club and most obliging about making up a rubber. The game is limited to pennies; roughly, two cents.

The standard of play at Almack's is high. The club opens after lunch and remains open until two in the morning. Men and women are both eligible. There are sometimes sixteen tables going at once, and it is not necessary to know the players to cut in at a table. I remember a fine player there, Mr. X., who used it a good deal. He was totally blind and played with special marked and raised cards. When he left the make, third hand would declare the trumps and tell him what was in dummy. Then, as one of his adver-

saries played a card they would announce it, and without a moment's hesitation he would call the card he wished played from dummy. He was a nearly perfect player and rarely chucked a

"Badsworth," whose books on bridge are so popular in England, also played a great deal at Almack's and, although his game is not as good as it used to be, he is still a sound and careful player. Another delightful member there was Sir John Bonsor, formerly Chief Justice of Cevlon. Sir John was not only stone-deaf but a very great invalid as well. I remember playing many rubbers with him and having him constantly remind me about the necessary signals when I declared the trumps. If I made it diamonds, I was to point to my ring; hearts, to my heart; spades, I was to make a shovel of my hands; while, with clubs as trumps, I was to shake my fist in his Once, during the course of a rubber he misunderstood my club signal, and, in order to show him his error, I shook my fist at him several times.

Later in the day, I was told that I had been severely criticized-by a lady at a near-by table who did not know Sir John's infirmity-for losing my temper with so old a man, and for shaking my fist in his face. She added that this was a fine example of Ameri-

can manners.

Perhaps, however, the most extraordinary bridge-player in England is Mr. Johnson-Scott-I think he has come into a title in the last year or so, but of this I am not certain. He has no arms and plays entirely with his toes. This will, I am certain, arouse my readers to a pitch of absolute disbelief. but I can assure them that he is a wellknown player and that it is the truth, and nothing but the truth. He sorts his hand-or should one say "foot"?on the floor, gathers the cards into suits, and flicks them upon the table with unerring dexterity. The cards are, of course, shuffled and dealt for him, the tricks gathered, the dummy manipulated, and the score marked, but

it is absolutely true that he sorts his cards and plays them solely with his feet, on which he always wears very fine silk stockings.

To digress a little. I must give an instance of how players sometimes confuse, in their own minds, their bad luck and their lack of skill. This instance came to my attention a short time ago when Messrs. G., F., B., and W. were playing an afternoon rubber at the Knickerbocker Club in New York.

The dealer left it to dummy, whose hand was as follows: Clubs: ace, king, queen, jack, 5, 3, 2. Diamonds: king, jack, 7. Hearts: 8. Spades: 9, 3. The dealer held the ace and three small diamonds four small hearts, four small clubs, and the lone king of spades. The leader had five hearts to the jack, three small spades, three small diamonds, and two small clubs.

Dummy looked at his hand carefully and declared "no trumps." It seems that he had meant to say "clubs," but was pouring out a cup of tea and smoking a long cigar and had inadvertently said "no trumps." Third hand doubled, on the ace, king, queen of hearts, the ace, queen, jack, 10, 8 6, 5, of spades, the queen and two small diamonds and no clubs. Dummy redoubled, still thinking he had made it clubs, and third hand said "enough."

As dummy laid down his hand he remarked to third hand: "I don't see what you doubled on, I have every trump in the pack.'

"Trumps?" screamed third hand. "There aren't any trumps. It's no

trumps!"

A confused discussion then arose and it was finally decided that as the dummy had clearly said "No trumps," the make must stand, but, for some obscure reason, they agreed that it should stand at twenty-four per trick and not at forty-eight.

The leader led the knave of hearts and third hand overtook with his queen. At this point if third hand had played his ace of spades, as he should have done, he would have made ten tricks, doubled, or ninety-six points. Instead

of doing so, he led his queen of spades, in order, as he naively said, to "fool

the dealer."

The lone king of spades of course held the trick, after which stroke of luck the dealer proceeded to make seven clubs and four diamonds, or twelve tricks, one hundred and fortyfour points, besides twenty for the slam and one hundred for the rubber.

This stupid play actually occurred and actually cost the leader and third hand twenty-three dollars each, at five-cent points, or forty-six dollars for the two. After it was all over, third hand cursed his luck most roundly and almost abused his partner for not holding the king of spades. The whole hand was an extraordinary one, and, while the dealer and dummy had begun it by feeling a sense of impending disaster, they finished it in a whirl of

good nature and elation.

I remember another very amusing instance of a mistaken declaration. This occurred at the New York Whist Club a few years ago, and Mr. S. was the hero of the episode. After looking carefully at his hand Mr. S., the dealer, declared hearts. He had meant to declare clubs, being twenty-four on the rubber game and having six clubs in his hand, but his mind was wandering and some demon of perversity made him say "hearts." Before he even realized his blunder the leader had doubled. Mr. S. tried meekly to explain that his call had been made in error, but, after a mild protest from his adversaries, he finally accepted the inevitable with the easy grace and good nature which have always characterized his play.

His hand was as follows: Ace, king and two small diamonds; three small hearts; six clubs, to the jack, 9; no spades. Dummy went down with four hearts to the queen; two small diamonds: seven spades to the jack; no clubs. The leader held ace, king, jack, ten of hearts; ace, queen, 10 of spades; king, queen, 10 of clubs; and queen, 9, 6, of diamonds. Third hand held king, 9, 7, of spades; ace and three small clubs; two small hearts; jack, 10

and two small diamonds.

The leader, feeling pretty confident of a "killing," led the king of clubs, probably the best opening of the hand. The dealer smiled an ample smile and proceeded to business. When slaughter was over the dealer had ruffed three clubs in dummy, as well as three spades in his own hand; he had made his ace and king of diamonds, and had ruffed the third round of diamonds with dummy's last trump, making three odd tricks and forty-eight points. This was, of course, a phenomenal distribution of the cards, but it actually occurred and the leader was left, at the end of the holocaust, grimly clutching his four good honors in hearts, while everything else had been swept away from him. Had the leader, in this hand, played three round of trumps-an incorrect thing to do, to be sure-he and his partner would have won thre odd tricks instead of losing them. It seems almost incredible that so poor a collechis partner would have won three odd tricks against such a battery of trumps and pictures as was held by the leader and his partner.

Four gentlemen were recently playing bridge for fairly high stakes in a New York club and a discussion arose among them about a rather pretty hand. The score was-East and West 28; North and South 12. They had each won a game, and East had dealt and left the make to West, who declared spades. South looked at his hand and doubled, as he had a fairly good hand and saw that one trick would give East and West the rubber, whether doubled or not. West refused to redouble and South led for the first trick. They all discarded from weakness. After the hand was over and the cards picked up, North, who was scoring, scored up twenty points, or five odd tricks, and the game. East then declared that it was impossible and offered to wager that, if the cards were laid out, North and South could not possibly make eleven

tricks out of the hand.

As some of my readers may like to try their skill at it—it is not a trick hand but merely a good straight test of bridge—I will give it here, so that those who wish to puzzle over it may do so. At the end of this article I will append the analysis and the solution of the hand. The cards were distributed as follows:

East (dealer).

Queen, jack, 6 of spades; queen, 10, 7, 3 of clubs; jack of diamonds; 7, 6, 4, 3, 2 of hearts.

West (dummy).

9, 8, 4, 3 of spades; 6, 5, 4 of clubs; king, 10, 5 of diamonds; king, jack, 10 of hearts.

South (leader).

Ace, king, 10 of spades; ace, king, jack, 8 of clubs; 9, 8, 7, 6, 3 of diamonds; 5 of hearts.

North (third hand).

7, 5, 2 of spades; 9, 2 of clubs; ace, queen, 4, 2 of diamonds; ace, queen, 9, 8 of hearts.

The problem is for North and South to make eleven tricks against a perfect

defense.

Bridge is certainly an extraordinary game in that men of dull and inactive minds sometimes become great players, while the astutest and cleverest men are often unable to master it. The late Lord Russell of Killowen, although one of the most brilliant legal minds of his time and a great devotee of the game, was a very poor "bridger." He was said to be one of the biggest losers in England, as he invariably played for very high stakes, and was never more than an indifferent player. Mr. Asquith, the present prime minister, although he has played bridge for over three years, is a very inferior player. I have, my-self, played with him on one or two occasions and have marveled at his lack of skill in a game so comparatively simple, when it is everywhere admitted that his is one of the clearest and most brilliant minds in England.

I will close this article with one more story. There was a well-known nobleman, Lord de—, who, some years ago, in the days of straight whist, was a famous player in England. Notwithstanding his skill, he simply could not play fair, and had a distressing habit

of slipping a high card on the bottom of the pack—after the cut. In this way he was always sure of the ace, the king, or the queen of trumps when it was his turn to deal. He was finally detected in the fraud and left London precipitatedly for the Continent, where, after a few years, he died. A well-known wag in London suggested, as a suitable epitaph for the unfortunate nobleman, the following lines:

Here lies Lord de—— In confident expectation Of the last trump.

Here is the solution of the doubled spade hand previously mentioned in this article. The card in italic letters wins the trick.

Trick I.

King clubs, 4, 9. 3.

After this trick the two red suits in dummy look tempting for South to lead through, but his partner's 9 of clubs looks encouraging, and he continues with his ace.

Trick 2.

Ace clubs, 5, 2, 7.

North has signaled and can have no more clubs. South can now give his partner a ruff in clubs and expect him to lead trumps. Besides, two ruffs in clubs would save the game.

Trick 3.

8 clubs, 6, 2 spades, 10 clubs.

North, here, cannot lead away from his red tenaces, and, as his partner has doubled, must lead a trump.

Trick 4.

7 spades, queen, king. 3.

The dealer plays his queen of spades to deceive his adversaries. Still intent on having the spades led to him, and hoping that his partner may have two trumps, one to ruff and one to lead, South plays his jack of clubs.

Trick 5.

Jack clubs, 10 hearts, 2 diamonds,

queen clubs.

This is the crucial point in the hand. If North trumps the jack of clubs—he can never go game, as he will be forced

to lead away from his red tenaces up to a dummy with both of the red suits guarded. As West unguards his heart suit, North discards a diamond, showing his partner that he wants a heart led to him. Had West discarded a diamond, North would have thrown a heart-asking his partner for a lead in diamonds. In the play of the hand it matters not what dummy discards. The heart is, on the whole, dummy's best discard as the diamond looks too risky, with the whole suit practically against him. North played very intelligently in not trumping. Most players would have slapped out their trump and ruined the hand. North could perfectly well see that when East took the trick he must either lead a trump or a red suit, both of which leads would result to his (North's) advantage.

Trick 6.

Jack diamonds, 3, 5, queen.

Whether East leads a trump, a heart or a diamond, he is "dished." On the whole, however, the jack of diamonds looks the safest lead.

Trick 7.

5 spades, 6, ten, 4.

This was North's chance to lead trumps through the dealer, a chance which he had been eagerly waiting for.

Trick 8.

Ace spades, 8, 4 diamonds, jack

spades.

Here South can see that East's queen of spades must drop. As his partner has thrown two diamonds, he *must* venture his lone five of hearts.

Trick Q.

5 hearts, jack, queen, 2.

Trick 10.

Ace hearts, 3, 6 diamonds, king hearts.

North has only to go on playing his hearts until West ruffs and leads a diamond.

There is no possible way of making a small slam out of this hand if dummy plays it correctly. Can my readers see any way, by which North and South can make eleven tricks, against a perfect defense, by South's opening the hand with one of his red suits—either the five of hearts or the top of his sequence in diamonds?

4

AN UNSELFISH HERMIT

'TIS sometimes good to be alone— Deep thinkers frequently affirm it— To seek some spot afar, unknown, And dwell there as a very hermit.

For me, I'm not at all inclined
To frown on folks who go in hiding,
There to restore a tired mind,
Or to escape a world too chiding.

Indeed I think that loneliness,
Instead of, as some say, distressing,
Is often truly more or less
A source of comfort and a blessing.

But I'm no selfish wight, and so
When I'm alone I so prepare it,
I have a brown-eyed lass I know
Along with me—to share it,
BLAKENEY GRAY.





HE ain't what I heretofore considers ragin' handsome, Red," Arizony's slow drawl is considerable pensive as he runs his slender fingers through his black topknot. "But take her

all in all I considers her the most effective female I ever lays my eyes on."

"Well, my cow-punchin' Don Ho-an," I laughs classic sarcastic, "seein' that in times prior you always files the first claim on every unattached petticoat that wanders onto these feedin'-grounds; and seein' you ain't ever been able to prove up on one of 'em, I claims discovery rights for this once and desires you to keep off my lines till I gets legal title or announces that I abandons the location."

Now I concedes that my fling at Arizony's uniform bad luck in the game of love ain't really bubblin' over with the milk of human kindness, but I holds it don't nowise justify what he shoots back at me 'bout a second after he finishes lookin' me over mighty contempt-

HOUS.

"Just 'cause you happens to first ketch sight of her golden locks as they frames her face in the stage winder, my freckled-faced, carrot-headed Lothario, ain't no reason why a goodlookin' gent should entire spoil the scenery by effacin' himself from her view."

I admits candid that if I has any weak spot it's rubbed raw when my appearance personal is alluded to derogatory. And while I knows, of course, that from old and close friends

we must natural expect the plain and harrowin' truth 'bout what they saveys us to be special sensitive and touchy about; and while I has to admit that my features ain't, strictly speakin', very Apollerlike in their general tout onsomble, I'm that enraged for a second that I clean forgets a ten-year friendship and reaches for my gun.

"Don't pull your shootin'-iron, Red," hollers that insultin' cow-puncher, edgin' himself along the platform for the saloon door, "for I apologizes abject and concedes that you're a heap better look

in' than-than-"

"Who?" I breaks in eager inquirin' and complete mollified, for I has nat'-rally a warm and forgivin' disposition,

He don't answer for a second, but takes off his big white hat and presses his hands ag'in his head as though there's somethin' terrible the matter with him; then his black eyes takes on a dancin' glitter and he drawls in as mean a tone as the human voice kin be made to sound:

"I knows you'll excuse my mentionin' any name, Red, when I tells you that I've near busted my head tryin' to think of some gent who wouldn't shoot me on sight if he ever hears of my makin' such a invidious comparison ag'in him." And he jumps inside out of range leavin' me to cool off the best way I knows how.

It's quite a few seconds 'fore I ca'ms down enough to see clear. Then I gazes at the cloud of gray alkali dust that's bein' whirled up from the rattlin' wheels of Pete Jordan's old buckboard as he turns for the ford that leads to his ranch trail. Through a little rift in the floatin' haze that's slow siftin'

back over the tents and shacks, I ketches sight of the girl who's just struck Hell's Kitchen from Deadwood, to make her Uncle Pete and his wife a indefinite visit. As her yaller hair sinks down below the banks of the Little Missouri, I thinks of what Arizony's said 'bout her not bein' pertik'ler handsome and I murmurs audible:

"That's your fix, too, Red; so not bein' much for looks you got to make yourself effective, which'il sure skin that ornery cow-puncher's beauty com-

plete.

"That's the kind of stuff a gent has to have in him," chips in a tickled falsetter, "when he makes up his mind to draw cards in the excitin' and allurin'

game of love."

Rollin' my chiny-blue eyes I sees them alarmin' words comes from tow-headed Doc White, who I sudden remembers was settin' on the end of the platform when Arizony and me gets to chinnin'.

The doc runs the camp drug-store and, under a Dakoty license, 'tends to non-fatals, for he's handy with knives and probes. He's likewise a sort of news-agency along the range as he's kept movin' frequent to look after gents who gets overheated in argiment. He's wearin' a mighty meanin' grin, and when I thinks of the gallons of free whisky I'll have to set out if them indiscreet musin's of mine gets into current circulation, I turns lurid and am that tongue-tied I can't say a word. Doc savevs my bein' helpless and after gaspin' for breath once or twice he chokes out:

"I can't hold them tender musin's of yours sacred, Red." Seems like he's goin' to strangle and I'm wonderin' whether I better shoot or run when he ketches his wind and whispers: "'Cept-

in' on one condition."

"Name her." says I, prompt but with my heart sinkin', for I'm afraid there ain't no limit to his greed which misgivin's certain shows on my face, for he answers:

"Oh, I ain't a goin' to hold you up for the road to hell, for"—givin' me a drug-store wink—"I'm personal opposed to runnin' a gin-mill-open and notorious."

This makes me feel considerable easier, as I happens to know that doc is playin' on a mighty short bank-roll at the time and I've been figurin' that I'll have to fatten it a good deal or become the standin' treat-joke for the Bad Lands cattle country. So I glows joyous:

"Spread out your cards, for they're sure winners." Then I gets sudden suspicious, for he's wearin' a smile that's peculiar, and I adds hasty: "Less you is figurin' to make me pull down my notice of intention concernin' this female that's ridin' long with Pete

yonder."

"I s'pose if it got down to cases, Red," smiles doc, a twistin' his silky, straw mustache, "I could easy force your hand, for if I starts the story goin' I feels confident when it gets to the girl you wouldn't prove much effective 'cept for laughin' purposes; but I won't be that low-down with a old friend. All I asks is that you binds yourself not to give it away to nobody that temporary I'm skatin' on awful thin ice financial, for I proposes to come in on this game myself. And while this female may be a exception there's many a one that eliminates gents with shoe-string bank-rolls from her list of eligibles; and as you're the only man on the range that I've tipped my hand to in this pertik'ler I holds you responsible if it leaks out."

I'm that tickled at gettin' off so easy that I gushes impulsive: "It's a deal, doc, and I agrees solemn that if you happens to win out in this interestin' game for which we is just rifllin' the cards, I'll stake you indefinite to a couple of thousand so's you kin cele-

brate it right and proper."

Then we strolls into my emporium. Arizony's leanin' up ag'in the bar lookin' sentimental thoughtful. He gives a expressive motion to the barkeep as we walks up, and while we're takin' our liquor doc explains how he's declared himself as bein' a hopeful candidate for the affections of Pete's niece.

"Which ain't none surprisin'," laughs

Arizony humorous, "seein' she's the only unhitched female on these feedin'grounds for hungerin' man to make love to, and which it's sure every gent on the Little Missouri'll be tryin' to do

'fore we're a week older.'

"Sech bein' the case," says doe, his brown eyes lightin' up playful, "I has a almost irresistible impulse to saddle up inmediate, and trail out to Pete's, and let her glance over my hand 'fore she gets too many other fellers' pictures in her mind. I wouldn't say nothin' about this," he grins, "but seein' that I couldn't get out of camp without you gents seein' me, I suggests we all goes so's to be on hand together when play opens."

"Seems like we may be some prematoore in trailin' her so close"—Arizony's drawl is killin' funny—"but as we stands, so to speak, with our breasts bare to the assaults of the Bad Lands entire, I reckon if we can figure a excuse for callin' so sudden, the play ain't such a bad one after all."

"Which this pretext is plumb sufficient," says I, reachin' for a big jug that has been filled for Pete and which in the excitement of the girl's comin' he drives off and forgets. And a half-hour later we're slow-lopin' for his ranch which backs up ag'in Rattlesnake Butte some six miles up the river.

As we ambles along we discusses the interestin' lay-out friendly, but it's agreed that there ain't to be no rules governin' our play after we has made

the first call en masse.

We've sort of run out of talk and are pokin' along easy. I has one leg throwed over the pommel of my saddle and am moonin' sentimentallike at the settin' sun which is paintin' the sky till it looks as though all the lignite coal that's seamin' the buttes of the Dakoty Bad Lands must be on fire, when I'm woke from my dreamin' by hearin' doc holler:

"Look at the dust risin' over the

hump of that knoll vonder."

As I turns my head a pony shoots out from under a hill on our left quarter as if Old Nick himself was chasin' it. We soon sees that the thing that's straddlin' that flyin' brone is a heathen Chinee, named Wang Pu, the same being' cook and handy man general for Pete and his wife. When this racin' pigtail gent ketches sight of us he begins yellin'; and though we can't make out what he says we knows there must be trouble at the ranch, so we goes to the spur and the next minute he's chatterin' his pigeon-English in our ears.

"My bloss glod blite old man, and he glone—" When bein' some considerable excitable and impulsive I grabs him by his cue and threatens to blow his head off if he don't talk United

States.

"Lattlesnake gette out joss-house and nippe Plete," pigeons Wang. "Old man telle me ride like helle to gette more whisky or him dead belly quick."

We don't understand complete what the Chink means, but we makes out that Pete's been bit by a rattler. And as I knows that Arizony has the best piece of horse-flesh under him I hands him the jug; then he goes racin' off for the ranch three miles away. Doc hangs close behind him, and I does my best to keep 'em in sight, but the pace is too fast for my bronc as it's carryin' fifty pounds overweight and I soon falls The next minute the Chinese lopes past, leavin' me to bring up the rear of the procession. I keeps forcin' my pony all I kin and it soon gets that tired that it clean overlooks a gopherhole in the trail, which results in my being slung over the ornery brute's head in sech a way that my two hundred and twenty frame is rendered complete oblivious to the surroundin' scenery for quite a few minutes after I crashes ag'in the sun-baked bosom of Mother Earth.

When I final rounds to my temper ain't improved none as I ketches sight of my brone, which I sees a good three-quarters away walkin' cam'ly off for Hell's Kitchen. And 'fore I manages to limp the two miles that stretches seemin' onendin' before me to the ranch I has complete exhausted all the words I knows that's anywise fit for sech a occasion. But at last I crawls up onto the verandy and steps into the settin'-

room uncerimonious. Pete's lyin' on the sofy and his wife's little gray head is bobbin' round mighty anxious as she sets fannin' away the flies from the old man's half-open, heavy-breathin' mouth.

"Do you think uncle's goin' to die, doctor?" I hears the girl whisper as I walks across the room to survey her snorin' relative at p'int-blank range.

And that foxy pill-dispenser immediate begins dealin' from the bottom of the pack by puttin' on a awful wise look as he breathes into her little ear with his lips a lot closer to it than is required for speakin' purposes:

"He's mighty near unconscious now, Miss Fay"-her last name's Granger-"but I believes my perfessional skill

can pull him through."

Her sky-blue eyes flashes up an admirin' glance into his sparklin' brown ones, then he gets a smile which makes me most sick with envy. This takin' advantage of a innocent female I considers some low-down, for soon as I looks Pete over I knows that he ain't in no more danger of dyin' from that snake-bite than I be; 'cause it's plain to the practised eye that he's nothin' but just comfortable full from the whisky that's been poured down him constant and steady for over threequarters of a hour. Knowin' the deception that's bein' worked I comes mighty near exposin' doc's brace-game instanter; but I don't want to make no bad break so I just keeps still and tries to look speakin' sympathetic for the next two or three minutes.

Then I starts in to make myself effective along sech lines as seems feasible under the s'posed harrowin' circumstances. Bein' a powerful believer in smilin' 'stead of weepin' I fires off a few bon-mots which acts as liveners of the gloom of possible hoverin' death; and as the clouds begin liftin' Pete rouses up enough to call for another

After this exhibition of nat'ral thirst, doc announces prideful that he's pleased to say definite that he's succeeded in bringin' his patient out of what kin fairly be called the very jaws of death. "I guess, doc," I grins sarcastic facetious, for I can't stand his posin' as Pete's savior no longer, "that them jaws you mentions would a closed permanent if it hadn't been for my goin' to the trouble of saddlin' up just to do a old friend a good turn by deliverin'

his whisky,'

"Primary you is entitled to some credit, Red," Arizony's laughin' drawl breaks in, for he tumbles that I'm a seekin' to humble the medical gent, "but I considers most of it's due me, for I starts the likker runnin' down Pete's throat which I sure claims don't require no doctor's assistance, even if he does come in ten minutes after and claim the perfessional right to continer

the irrigatin'.'

Doc colors up feverish at this shatterin' of his pretended claims and for a few seconds there's what you might call a awk'ard silence. Then the girl darts a beam of sympathy from under her long, droopin' lashes into saw-bone's embarrassed eyes and immediate comes to his rescue by switchin' the subject onto Wang's hand-painted rattler that has so near proved her uncle's undoin'. And 'tain't long 'fore she suggests that we go out and look over the Chinee's joss-house which he's rigged up in a lean-to back of the kitchen,

And when we sees his lay-out I certain concludes that it covers 'bout every style of god that's in vogue in the Celestial Empire, for idols is sure scattered round profuse and bountiful. While we're examinin' the impotent, graven images which the heathen's been worshipin', he sticks his head in the door and the girl asks him why he adds a snake to his seemin' overflowin' col-

lection of fetiches.

"These belly ploor glods," he jabbers, wavin' his hand contemptuous at

the whole bunch.

Then he goes on to tell her that he's been havin' such bad luck lately that he concludes to try a live joss and see if he can't get the cards to runnin' a little smoother. Pursuin' this idee he rounds up a five-foot, fourteen-button rattler, and after paintin' it green, blue and valler he installs it as boss of his ineffective aggregation. But some way unknown the reignin' joss escapes and goes piroutin' for its native lair.

"We saw the thing twistin' along the trail as we stops at the house," says Fay explanatory, when Wang stops chatterin'; "and Uncle Pete jumps out to try and capture what we both thinks is some new kind of a snake. I didn't see just how it happens, but uncle hollers out the next minute that it's a rattler and that it has bit him in the hand; then I sees it go wrigglin' off into the grass. And," she laughs, switchin' on a heart-wrackin' smile, "I'm goin' to recapture it if I can, for I thinks there's just enough danger in pursuin' it to make the chase excitin'." Then her face turns dead-white and she sort of shivers as though she's took a sudden chill.

"Be you sick, Miss Fay?" asks doc auxious, for we all notices that the color's left her face and that she has a

scared look in her eyes.

"No—no." She half-shudders her words; then the blood comes rushin' back to her cheeks and, rubbin' her slim hand across her damp forehead like she's assurin' herself she's awake, she forces a nervous little laugh to her

tremblin' lips.

"I knows it's awful foolish for me to say anything about it"—her voice sounds weak and faint—"but I'd no more than stopped talkin' when right before my eyes I seems to see that painted thing all coiled up; its forked tongue was dartin' out of its wicked jaws and it had its ugly head drawn back just ready to strike me in the face; then everything turns black till"—lookin' at doc—"I hears you speak."

"It's more'n likely it's a warnin'," says I, for I'm a absolute believer in omens and such like; "and I hopes sincere that you gives up immediate your notion of capturin' this wanderin', dead-

ly Chink joss."

"Oh, I ain't a believer in signs"—she's smilin' more nat'ral now—"and I'm not goin' to be frightened out of it by a case of overexcited nerves," tossin' her blond head emphatic and startin' for the settin'-room.

We trails 'long after her and finds

that Pete is restin' comfortable where we left him though he's still too groggy to have anything to say. But his wife begins talkin' and tells us how the rattlers is gettin' so plentiful on the butte that lately they've got to wanderin'

down onto the ranch.

"We've lost four or five steers in the last two weeks from these awful pests," she sorrers at Fay, "and your uncle was sayin' just the other day that he 'lowed we'd have to hunt up new feed-in'-grounds or lose most of our stock and mebbe our lives, too. There don't seem to be no way for us to get rid of 'em," she goes on, wipin' her eyes hopeless, "for Pete says 'twould keep half the range busy all summer to exterminate 'em."

There ain't nothin' more said for a minute or two, but Fay sets there with her sky-blue eyes sweepin' over Arizony, doc, and me mighty thoughtful. Now I don't say positive that the girl figures out in detail how she's goin' to get them crowdin' rattlers eradicated, but I gives it as my onbiased opinion that in them few seconds that she gazes us over she has mapped out her campaign general, and has definite settled in her mind that the three of us is to take a active hand in the game; for they ain't no doubt that she sees from the jump that every one of us stands ready to back her play onlimited. But when she speaks she appears mighty innocent and only flashes one card from the pack she's been makin' up.

"Why, Aunt Ellen," she ripples, though her hazy, Injun-summer smile is directed into our warm and thumpin' hearts, "I'd like nothin' better than to try my new sportin' Winchester on 'em. Don't you think," her soul-disturbin' eyes seemin'ly lightin' on each one of us gents personal, "that one person could do a lot toward killin' off the rattlers in the next two months?"

"Sure," I answers prompt, "but two could do a heap more slaughterin'; and it makes me complete happy, miss, to tell you that I just happens to have onlimited time to devote to that excitin' and allurin' amoozement myself."

And 'fore doc or Arizony has a

chance to set in their chips I gets a smile that makes that two months' dollar-time which I tenders seem plumb worthless. But the next second doc's falsetter and Arizony's drawl is blendin' hasty declarin' that they, too, is tickled to death to find some helpful way of spendin' their valueless time.

The girl perfesses to be terrible surprised at what she calls our "generous offer," and turns to Pete, who's blinkin' at us kind of half-incredulous.

"Don't it please you a whole lot, uncle," she jubilates, "to know that

you has such good friends?" But knowin' that he ain't personal got no more to do with them offers of our'n than has the kiote that's just tuned up across the river, Pete don't make no direct answer. He winks his bushy brows rapid for a tick or two, while pullin' at his ramblin' pepper and salt whiskers, then he gives a grunt which is oncivil, and reaches for the jug as though he's got to drown his disgust

at sech a fool question.

This rudeness sort of causes a chill in the atmosphere, so I nudges the boys, at the same time winkin' expressive, and after I tells Pete I needs a pony we moves out for camp. And from the next morning the three of us devotes our time almost exclusive exterminatin' the rattlesnakes on old man Jordan's ranch, though nat'rally sech occupation is actooally incidental to the pursuit of his niece, who we're all doin' our level best to make say one little three-lettered word which she's seemin' mighty averse to utterin'.

Of course the fever spreads over the Range entire, and after the first week hardly a day passes but what there's a dozen or more gents crawlin' round over Rattlesnake Butte a doin' their parts in one of the most interestin' and excitin' games ever devised by woman. And every day her little twenty-two Winchester cracks like a whip as it mingles in the roar of the forty-fives. And I just notes in passin' that she's equal effective with her gun or her killin' blue eyes, for whatever either of 'em is aimed at sure becomes her immediate victim.

She treats everybody mighty friendly and cordial, but from my experience personal I thinks I am safe in statin' that when a feller tries love-makin' to her she cools to theoretical zero instanter. But spite of her not appearin' to warm up to anybody in pertik'ler it only took one glance to see that the fluid which paints the scarlet line of her lips was good red blood; and as I frequent watches it blushin' her blond. tanned cheeks I knows there's a smolderin' fire runnin' in her veins that'll blaze high when the right feller comes along and blows it into flame; and I keeps hopin' almost ag'in' hope-I sometimes thinks-that I'll yet be the man to start the conflagration.

As time goes on most everybody on the Range, 'ceptin' Arizony, doc, and me gets considerable discouraged, for it sure begins to look as if Fay wouldn't hitch up with the best man that ever buckles on a gun. And gradually the attendance at her heels falls off till our original three-cornered combination has

the field substantial to itself.

The rattlers has now been thinned down so that we ain't gettin' many. But for some unaccountable reason nobody's ever even ketched a sight of the Chinee's tri-colored work of art which the girl has been hopin' all along to capture; and it's the general opinion that the lurid joss was murdered by jealous friends and relatives when it put in its appearance on its old squirmin'-ground.

As it's gettin' some late in the season the girl suggests to Arizony, doc and me that she thinks it'd be a good idee to fix a date for assemblin' the Range together for a final round-up which probable cleans out the snakes total. Of course what she thinks—we thinks, I causes it to be made known too. general that on that ocasion likker'll be as free as the muddy water in the Little Missouri that twists purrin' along in front of Pete's house, which added attraction to the girl's drawin' powers I figures guarantees a onprecedented gatherin'.

The day before this final massacre is to take place I ketches Fay when the mercury seems a little higher than usual, and I ag'in urges her to take a ondivided half-interest in my liquor and speculatin' emporium which I points out, more pertik'ler than former, is ondeniably the best payin' institution in the Bad Lands. I also spreads out attractive that her share of the proceeds enables her to do Chicago, New York or even gay Parree, and that I'll be entire satisfied to be the gent that has the honor of furnishin' the funds to back them travels.

She don't say anything for a minute and, believin' that I has at last made myself effective, I attempts delicate to circle her slim waist as I deems that, with a nat'ral et cetery or two, the proper method of sealin' and concludin' sech a contract. But she shys off stormy. The temperature falls so sudden that I'm chilled to the marrer by the cuttin' blast that whistles round me for a few seconds: then there's a lull follered by currents warmin' gradual; and final comes a ca'm with the sun shinin' moderate ag'in.

I-ever marries"-her voice sounds far off as though she's debatin' the question to herself-"it won't be for money." Then a tinge of warmer blue softens her eyes sympathetic, for she sees I'm needin' to be braced up considerable, and she says gentle:

"I'm awful sorry, Red, but I can't care for you-that way at all; but I holds you in my heart the same as my own brother."

Of course her last words is meant to let me down as easy as she kin, but they don't cushion my fall much; for, when I begins talkin' to her, my hopes attains heights total unwarranted, so I has a long ways to drop. But my makeup is sech that I hides hard knocks comparative easy. And as I sees arguin' the matter is useless-for it's entire plain that I belongs in the discard-I manufactures a laugh which shelters my real feelin's and I starts in jokin' her some impertinent.

"Now that you has shoved me into your brother-deck," I grins, "s'pose you tells your last relative whether there's any gent on the Range that you does care for-that-a-way."

son for leavin' the country

She looks at me a minute like she's half a notion to bust out cryin', and I feels like a brute; but she brushes her slender fingers over her eyes as if she's only removin' a little stray lock of her shinin'-gold hair that's flutterin' caressin' ag'in' her cheek and the threatenin' shower passes over as she says in her meller soprano:

"No, Red, honest there ain't anybody-yet; but"-her nat'ral ripple's come back and I thinks she's only foolin'-"I'm 'fraid if I stays here much longer there might be one, so I'm goin' back to Deadwood the next mornin' after the round-up."

"Mighty sudden notion, ain't it?" I asks powerful s'prised.

"Yes; I only makes up my mind to go-last night." The way she says this complete upsets my idee that she was only jokin' when she laughs her rea-

"Arizony?" says I for I'm dyin' to know who the gent is she's runnin' away from. She shook her head. "Belongs in the brother-pack, too, does he?" I inquires facetious. Her noddin' smile relieves my feelin's a lot, for I sure ain't wantin' that ornery cowpuncher's beauty to win out after the way he derides my plain but substantial features.

"Doc?"

She don't answer, but the flush that touches her cheeks tells me he's the lucky man. I ain't overs'prised at learnin' that saw-bones holds the best hand, for I has often been jealous of certain little flickers of a eyelid or a extry curvin' of her lips which Fay has always seemin' kept for his use ex-

"Has you told him you're a goin'?" Her blond head nods affirmative. "And does he know you cares for himthat-a-way?" I asks, for seein' I'm out of the game I'm figurin' to help his

"No," she breathes low and as I

thinks half-regretful.

"Well, I holds you're a makin' a awful bad blunder, Fay, for Doc White is a eddicated sharp and a good feller to boot." I waits a second for what I has

said to sink in proper 'fore addin' what I considers a justifiable strainin' of the truth: "'Sides that, he's comfortable well-off---"

"Oh, no, he ain't," she breaks in, "for he tells me last night himself that his drug-store is all he's got." Which onlooked-for statement of hers not only proves how careful a feller should be in Ivin' but likewise shows what a ninny a man kin make of himself when he gets the love microbe workin' in his system. "But I don't care bout that, Red. It's 'cause-" She stops and stands nervous clenchin' her slim hands for a second 'fore sayin' in a quick, excited whisper: "I got to talk now that I gets started. It's 'cause I ain't sure I cares for him enough-for that; and -and"-strikin' her little fist ag'in the butt of her rifle-"I'd rather put the muzzle of this ag'in my heart and pull the trigger than belong to a man I didn't-love."

Then, like a flash of lightnin' her mood changes and her blue eves are as seemin' clear and untroubled as the cloudless heaven archin' above our

heads.

"So you sees-brother," she laughs, "I has to run away from his temptin's." And raisin' her gun her steely sight sends a bullet through a rattler's brain that's lyin' stretched out on a ledge be-

low us.

I'd had a lot of experience with females and heretofore believes that I understands considerable about the workin's of their minds; but as we walks down the butte to examine Fay's kill I can't help murmurin' soft to myself: "The gent that thinks he knows anything whatever bout the ways of a maid writes himself down as a ass complete."

"What did you say?" asks the girl, thinkin' I'm speakin' to her direct.

And as I stoops over to pull off the ten-button rattles, I answers some inaccurate: "I was remarkin' that I defies anybody on earth to make a better shot than you has; for"—I points to the oozin', black-red spot between its beady, glazin' eyes-"your ball's as fair placed as if you'd used dividers."

She's as pleased as a child over my complimentin' her skill, but I knows there ain't no use of my tryin' to resume the prior subject, and we moves on for the house five hundred feet below.

The next mornin' from break of day till two minutes 'fore the round-up's to start, the boys comes lopin' up to Pete's from all over the Range. Then we all draws up in double-line on the riverbank in front of the long, ramblin' onestory house a waitin' for Fay to come out and lead us to the fray. Each gent is ragged special for the occasion by havin' a new silk handkercher round his neck; and if they's any color of the rainbow missin', it's 'count of the "Gents' Furnishin's" at Hell's Kitchen not havin' her in stock. As the clock in the settin'-room strikes ten, Fay steps out on the verandy with her little Winchester restin' snug in the holler of her roundin' bare left arm.

"Say! ain't she a picter?" comes Arizony's drawlin' whisper in my ear. "And, Red"—his tone shows he's breathin' deep-"I modifies my opinion original, for I now considers her as not only the most effective but likewise the handsomest female I ever sees." Which establishes my onquestionin' faith in that cow-puncher's jedgment

final and perpetual.

Coverin' that mass of burnished-gold hair of her'n is a wide straw hat with blue trimmin's hitched on artistic. A neat-fittin' elbow-sleeve jacket and a short huntin' skirt with more or less bunches of white jim-cracks attached matches the ribbons of her head-gear. And the trimmest pair of ankles my chiny eyes ever has the joy of glimpsin' peeps out under the shelterin' blue from their tan-colored, laced casin's which curve exact where they should to proper hold the hundred and twenty weight they carries.

She stands for a minute or two glancin' pleased, excited, up and down the double line of her hatless "brothers" that she's annexed durin' her ten weeks in the cattle country. Then her fingertips touches the half-parted scarlet line through which her white teeth shows

faint and she blows us the nearest thing to a kiss that any man in the bunch ever's had from those enticin' lips; and when she follers it with one of her heart-ravagin' smiles she sure comes near settin' a hundred Injuntanned, gun-carryin' men ravin' crazy.

"Oh, Lord," literal groans a gent standin' behind me, "to think that tomorrer she's actooally goin' to leave mighty close onfits me total for anything but weepin'." Then he yells: "Three cheers and firin' onlimited for the Rattlesnake Girl of the Little Mis-

souri!"

I ain't overstatin' it none whatever when I says that then and there pandemonium breaks loose; and 'fore steam's complete blowed off there's many a sombrero that hits the ground, after sailin' through the air, which looks a whole lot more like a sieve than any right part of a white man's burden. But at last the forty-fives gets back into their belts, and the ca'm that must foller every storm settles down until they ain't a sound but the faint splashin' of the yaller water that's ripplin' at our feet.

The next second Fay's bowin' and smilin' her thanks. Then with her eyes glowin' like a sapphire in the sun, her trim five-foot four trips down the steps as graceful as a antelope, and she leads her palpitatin' army to the field.

Doc, Arizony and me constitutes ourselves her bodyguard. Saw-bones is considerable dark, gloomy and pekul'ar, but the girl seems to be fairly bubblin' over with onadulterated happiness and joy; but knowin' what I does I feels confident that sech a front ain't total genuine, though she's certain in dead earnest 'bout not wantin' to be left alone with doc a instant. And as the day moves on I feels more sorry for him, for though he's gamed up a lot and is playin' some false cards hisself, I kin fairly see his tow-head turnin' gray from the strain he's laborin' under. But I can't help him none, for Fay has sealed my mouth absolute.

'Long in the afternoon, as the sun is beginnin' to think of goin' to bed, the shootin's 'bout died out, as the few rattlers survivin' are huntin' cover from the chill that night's shovin' before her. Most everybody's made for the ranch to get ready for the big feed which Pete is spreadin' for us in his new barn. We has started, too, but Fay turns off onto a point which juts out almost perpendicular over the river four hundred feet below.

"I just wants to take a farewell view of my—happy huntin'-grounds," she laughs in a onnat'ral, strained key, wavin' her hand across the valley where

the cattle is grazin'.

For a jiffy doc's brown eyes has a dog-appealin' look in 'em as he tries to ketch hers, but she don't seem to notice him, and he sort of gulps and peers over the edge of the cliff as though he's figurin' out 'bout how hard he'll strike if he jumps off. Fay turns her head away and shades her eyes a second, then she points her arm.

"See! There's Wang's joss down on that rock yonder," she fairly screams, she's so wild excited. And 'fore we realizes what she's doin' she's racin' for it fifty feet ahead of any of

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Bein' a lot overweight I has to be moderate, but doe and Arizony go flyin' after her with the pill-mixer in the lead.

"It's makin' for the cave," cries the girl, switchin' to a path that drops steep to a flat twenty feet under her.

White's made up his distance to within 'bout fifteen feet when I sees her stumble, and she rolls down the bank almost on top of the painted thing which now instant coils for business.

"My God!" yells doc, in a tone I never wants to hear ag'in. "It's goin'

to strike her in the face."

I knows I can't do any good, and I turns helpless sick as I sees that flat, swayin' green head with the forked tongue dartin' out of its slaverin', twitchin' jaws, while gleamin' bead eyes is measurin' the distance the rattler has to throw itself to put its deadly fangs into the white cheek lyin' faint only three feet away. I most falls myself then, for her warnin' in the joss-house flashes to my mind and I feels certain she'll never leave the Hills alive, for

practical there ain't no recoverin' when one's bit in the face.

Then I sees doc jump. His body shot out from the steep slope like steel springs had thrown him, and clearin' the girl he lands on the snake as it struck. For a instant I sees its lurid, squirmin' folds twistin' round doc's leg; then its ugly snappin' head is crunched out of shape under his iron-nailed heels. Turnin' he snatches Fay into his arms and holds her limp head in his hand as he looks wild over her face and neck to see where she's been bit. Then he laughs as though he's sudden gone

"It never teched her; it never teched

her!"

And he reels like a drunk man as he sets down on a ledge a holdin' Fay in his lap. And, iron-nerved as he is ordinary, he's that unstrung that he's cryin' like a baby when I reaches him, though he still hangs on to the girl for dear life, while Arizony rubs at her wrists tryin' to bring her to. Knowin' the proper thing for cases of nerves I sticks a bottle of bracer to saw-bones' lips, and in 'bout two or three seconds he's himself ag'in.

Just then Fay opens her lids and stares dazed, wonderin' at the feller that's holdin' her so close. Then a wave of color goes shootin' over her face and the light that almost purples her eyes as her senses sweep back complete satisfies me that the right breeze has final reached the smolderin' fire and burst it into everlastin' flame.

But Fay ain't no public performer and she slides away from her enfolder, who don't know what I does so of course he thinks he's never goin' to have a chance to hold her in his arms ag'in. I sees he's near mortal hurt, but he's game ag'in and tries to make a bluff by savin':

"I was terrible feared for a minute or two, Fay, that you wasn't goin' to git the Deadwood stage to-morrer mornin'."
"I——" she half-gasps, sort of side-

glancin' at me from under them long lashes. "I ain't goin'-if-

She stops short as doc's questionin' brown eyes ketches the truth from halfswimmin' but now plain-meanin' blue ones. For a mighty brief second he sets starin' at her like he's dreamin'; then his bottled-up feelin's blazes, and forgettin' they's company he stretches out his arms to take her. She shakes her head but glances at Arizony and me mighty expressive, when, considerin' ourselves day trow, we hasty steps out of sight behind the ledge.



THE CRY

THINK that she may never know again What sorrow is, for once within her breast She felt that blade that is the cruelest. And since may only smile at lesser pain; For once she heard Love crying in the night-A little child left frightened in the dark-(Ah, happy mothers who may rise and hark And bring these helpless ones to warmth and light!) She heard Love crying in the night alone, And might not even call to bid him know That one was near who dare not rise and go To comfort him; but, till the night was done, Listened and listened, impotent until Her heart broke and the world grew strangely still. THEODOSIA GARRISON.





ROM the first I had taken a keen interest in I. C., though the post quartermasters who preceded me apparently had accepted him as they would any other thing that was part of their daily

lives. But I, I flatter myself, am a bit of a philosopher, one tenet of whose philosophical creed is the study of one's fellow man. Also I am a bachelor—

which is another tenet.

His name on the pay-rolls appeared as Ichabod Crane, a civilian employee of the quartermaster's department. But the name of Irving's hero, I thought it fair to assume, had been taken by some one who first had made out these rolls because it fitted the initials by which he was known, and because some name was necessary in order that he might draw government pay. Years before he had appeared from nowhere, had hung around the corrals, and had made himself so useful that after a while he was permanently employed. This, beyond what any man could see for himself, was all that was known.

If for no other reason, his marvelous power over animals, and his understanding of them would have been enough to attract my interest. I had heard this power, among the simpleminded or insane, is not entirely unknown, but I never had seen it before. When speaking of the animals he loved so well, or of anything pertaining to them, he could express himself clearly and sensibly enough. Going far beyond that, his mind would lose itself in a fog, there to wander disconsolately about until at length it emerged on the

same side from which it had entered. I had long given up any hope of solving the mystery which surrounded him; then, in the strange way that those things do sometimes happen, it solved itself.

The solution began, I remember, the day that my old friend Redfield, colonel of the 99th Cavalry, took over command of the post. Every one was rejoicing at his coming, excepting only the Halketts. But then, this exception was only natural. Before his coming, the Halketts themselves had commanded—that is, Mrs. Halkett had. And any one knowing the lady would realize what this must mean.

That day would have been a trying one for me, I remember, had my philosophy permitted it. The vouchers and abstracts of my property returns would not fit. But then, I was far ahead of my papers on all the articles concerned, and both my civilian clerk and the sergeants were most efficient. So I dismissed the matter from my mind, and going out on my veranda, sat down

To my mind, there is no spot in Fort San Nicolas so pleasant as this veranda, which gives on the little rooms I had taken at one end of the quarter-master's stores. From it one could see not only nearly everything that went on at the post, but far beyond, over the green prairie, where stood the Indian teepees when their owners came from time to time to be swindled by the agents appointed to care for them.

As I sat down, I noticed that Redfield had left the K. O. quarters, on the opposite side of the broad, dusty parade-ground, and with his little granddaughter, Phillida, was coming

toward me. As he came, I thought for the hundredth time what a perfect specimen of the best military type he was, with his tall figure, broad shoulders, and thin flanks. His face, with its grizzled mustache, was as clean-cut as a cameo. In this, Philly resembled him, though she was so dark, with great eyes set in a face that promised later to become beautiful, and a mane of black hair to her waist. I had known her since she was a fat baby, rolling about on a blanket. Now she was nine, with legs and arms as thin as a spider's. Redfield seated himself on the veranda steps, and taking Philly on his knee, puffed at his eigar in silence, while I waited for him to begin.

"Drake, I came to see you about a horse or two," he said at last. "What have you in the corrals? Nearly any-

thing will do."

I looked at him in blank astonishment. That Redfield, of all people, should approach in such a way so important a matter as his horses was hardly believable. He saw, evidently, that I

was surprised.

"I know," he said, smiling a little. "I was particular about my mounts, but I've reformed that, now. Never too late to mend, you know-never too late. I must save, my boy-save! I'm the only relative Philly has in the world, and there's no knowing how long I'll be here to do for her."

"Nonsense," I answered sharply. "You're as hard and sound as a brickbat, and you've got twelve years to serve yet."

"I know-I know," he replied. "When I retire Philly'll be twenty-one. But who knows whether I'll live that long? Anything might prevent. On my last detail, you know. I had no need to be mounted. So now I think I'll just get you to let me have a horse or two on memorandum receipt. I'll try 'em a while, before I decide to buy, Drake. Understand?"

"You can have forty horses if you want 'em," I grunted. "And as far as I'm concerned, you can 'try' 'em till they die of old age. There are three hundred odd in the corrals, and there must be some good ones. I have a man that'll know. I'll send for him now.'

It isn't pleasant to have an old friend get into such a frame of mind. It rouses in one a most unphilosophical train of thought. So it was in an extremely bad humor that I went into my office to send a man for I. C. He, I knew, would have an intimate personal acquaintance with every horse in the place.

I was returning, when Philly came flying in. Throwing herself into my arms, she clung to me, trembling, her face hidden in my capacious blouse. This was not at all like her, but I was puzzled only for a moment. Then the raucous tones of Mrs. Halkett floated through the open window, as she talked

to the colonel.

"Why, Philly, what's all this for?" I asked, with what was intended for a reassuring laugh. "You mayn't like Mrs. Halkett, but she can't eat you, you know. Surely you're not afraid."

"Afraid? No!" she cried, and starting away from me, stood with every fiber of her little body tense. Then I saw that it was not with fear that she trembled, but rage-white rage.

"No, she can't eat me." Philly went on, through her clenched teeth. "It's not that. It's because she-but you won't tell Dad's Dad? Promise!"

"Dad's Dad" was her name for her grandfather. I should not have made any such promise, of course, but before I had time to think, I had weakly done

"She struck me! Struck me twicelike that!" hissed Philly, illustrating ruthlessly on both her ears. "But Dad's Dad mustn't know. It would only trouble him and make him angry, and he couldn't do anything to her. Listen to what she's saving now!" And she pointed dramatically.

I had no desire to laugh at Philly's heroics. The vindictive hatred on the child's face took all that was funny out of them. And besides, I sympathized with her more than perhaps I should. When once my attention had been called to what Mrs. Halkett was saying, I

could not help but hear.

"Though you may think, Colonel Redfield, that anything belonging to you is exempt from criticism, others still have some rights," she was saying, in a manner intended to be witheringly sarcastic. "Attracted by the screams of my dog-a harmless pet-I find him in the arms of your grandchild, who is forcing strawberries—strawberries down the unfortunate animal's throat. Upon the utter depravity of a child who would commit such an act, I shall comment only-

She had gone too far. Philly was attacked, and Philly's grandfather, frightened though he doubtless was at this awful person, bristled like a tur-

key-cock.

"Madam," said he, interrupting her, "I heartily regret the act of which you complain. I cannot explain it. But of this I am certain; it was prompted by a kindness of heart which, though mistaken, some of her elders would do well to emulate. I wish you good morning."

Redfield stamped into my room. Sitting down, he gathered the child tender-

ly into his arms.

"You heard what that lady said, didn't you, Philly, girl?" he asked very gently, as he always spoke to her. "Is it true?"

Philly was winking hard to keep back the tears which were flooding those big eyes of hers. She could not trust herself to speak, but nodded assent.

"Then why did you do it?" asked her

grandfather.

There was no reply, then. Sobs shook the thin little frame, and the tears came in earnest. The old soldier gathered her into his arms and soothed her as a woman might have done. With something like a woman's intuition, too, he knew that silence would be best until the storm had spent itself, and so he sat, his gray head bent over her black one. At this point I. C. shambled in; a figure that struck me afresh with wonder each time that I saw it.

Whatever his original stature might have been, at that time he was almost a dwarf, so bent and twisted was he. One leg was so much shorter than the other that for him to walk was the constant repetition of an acrobatic feat. Only his arms were normal. All his face was seamed and scored as though by fire, and was pulled toward the place. just under his right ear, where appeared the initials by which he was known-I. C.—inspected and condemned—evidently placed there by means of a brand such as was used on animals that were to be sold out of the service. pulling aside of his face all but closed the place where one eye had been, so that the expression was that of a ghastly, set grin, accompanied by the burlesque of a wink. The remaining eye was bright, blue, and piercing.

He was dressed in the uniform of an enlisted man; ragged and evidently made at different times for people of far different sizes. Yet they were brushed and clean, these blue clothes. The buttons shone, and the brokendown boots were blacked as carefully as though the wearer was trying to "make orderly." Neither Philly nor her grandfather noticed him at first. But I remarked that the one eye of I. C. was fastened upon the child with a look of tenderness and compassion that I should have thought his brain was too distorted to prompt, and his face to ex-

"Why did you do it, girl?" asked the colonel again, after Philly's weeping had moderated somewhat. "You must have known that the little dog wouldn't like it, and you are anything but cruel

to animals, generally."

Drying her eyes on the tail of her skirt, Philly looked up in his face.

"It was medicine," she declared. "No-body likes medicine, Dad's Dad. You said so yourself.'

"But the dog wasn't ill, was he?"

remonstrated her grandfather.

"He was. He was fat. So fat he could hardly walk, and he wheezed like General Ballard when he sleeps after dinner. He was fat like that pig back at Niobrara, and he wheezed, too -the pig did, I mean. And when I asked that captain doctor-Doctor Ward-about it, he said the pig was 'suffering from undue obesity,' but that

he could be cured if somebody would feed him on asparagus-tips or strawberries. I thought what would cure a pig would cure a dog. There wasn't any asparagus. And it's true, too, for that woman eats strawberries; she's thin, and she's a pig, even though she does walk like a camel," concluded Philly, with a vicious glance out of the window at Mrs. Halkett, who was returning home after having favored the commis-

sary with a visit.

I saw, as the eye of I. C. followed Philly's glance, a look of sympathetic resentment come over his face. Poor old Redfield was puzzled, and I knew that he was hunting around in his mind for a reproof that should not be too hasty and therefore severe-as though he could ever be severe with that child! But the reproof remained unspoken. At that moment he looked up and saw I.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed as I. C., straightening as well as he could, came to the salute. Mechanically the colonel answered the salute, whereupon the other dropped his hand smartly, and

stood at attention.

"That's the man I sent for," I hastened to explain. "He's the one who can tell best about the horses we have."

"But what does it mean? Who is this? Not one of the enlisted men, surely. Who treated him so?" demanded Redfield, speaking in his most snappish way, as he always did when his sympathies were roused. Before I could speak, I. C. was answering for himself.

"Once I was a soldier. I think I was. Many years ago. But that was in the other life, sir; the one I can't remember. Spavined, wind-broken, and loco now. Inspected and condemned, sir. Inspected and condemned these years gone, and thrown out to travel the road we must all go. Unfit for the service, sir-inspected and condemned."

With a voice strangely soft, he spoke in a sort of singsong that had no whine in it, but was simply that of a lesson oft-repeated. As he began, Philly slipped from her grandfather's knee. Running over to I. C., she caught his

hand, and passed it over her shoulder. Then, still holding it in both hers, she looked into his scarred face with a pity that was almost divine. The Madonna, when a child, must have looked like that, I think. Mentally I contrasted her face as it then was with the way she had looked a few minutes before, when speaking of Mrs. Halkett.

The arm of I. C. tightened about her. and so they stood, as strangely assorted a pair as the world could show. I could see that Redfield was about to call Philly back; then a light of understanding breaking over his face, he thought better of it, and spoke to me instead.

"He says he was in the service, and undoubtedly he was. Can't you find out

anything about the man?"

I told him all I knew. It did not

take long.

"Do you think you could pick out a couple of mounts for me, then?" asked Redfield of I. C., as I finished, in much the same tone in which he might have asked the question of Philly.

"I can, sir. Four, if the colonel wishes them. Sound, with good manners and well up to his weight. I think I know what he'd want, and he'd find it hard to get better anywhere."

I. C. spoke with the incisiveness which any man who thoroughly understands his business might use. Even I, who understood his ways, was startled at the change in his manner; the colonel was fairly at a loss for a reply.

"Very good, I. C.." said I. "Have the four cut out into one of the small pens at once, then. We'll be along di-

rectly to have a look at them." I. C. saluted and went. Turning to me, Redfield began to ask more questions about the strange being who had just left us, and to speculate as to the causes of his present condition. But already I had told him all that I could; his speculations were the same as those I had indulged in many times, and led nowhere. Still, the discussion interested us both, and was continued to some length. Finally Redfield started.

"Where's Philly?" he asked. you see her go?"

I had not, and said so. She had

tired of our company, I supposed, as well she might, and probably slipped away to play with the other children

of the post.

"I doubt it," replied Redfield, going to the door, and looking anxiously around. "She doesn't often play with other children; their plays don't interest her, she says."

"Even so, she hardly can have gotten into any mischief—now that Mrs. Halkett's pug is exempt," said I.

"I suppose not," he assented, somewhat dubiously. "Perhaps we'd better go and look at those horses at once, so I can return and find her. I shouldn't have let her out of my sight. Mary would have rated me severely, had she been here."

"Has Mary left you, then?" I asked in surprise as we started down the lane that led to the corrals. Mary was Philly's nurse, and an old acquaintance

of mine.

"Left us? Permanently, you mean? Heaven forbid!" replied Redfield, with unmistakable sincerity. "Her sister's ill, and Mary went to see her, that's all. Even so, I don't see how we—Philly and I—can get along without her much longer. There's no danger of her leaving us permanently, as long as she lives. She's about the most faithful and single-hearted woman now in the world, I think."

"Then all you have to guard against is that some fellow will find that out and get her to marry him," I observed.

"No fear!" said Redfield. "She was the first and only nurse that Philly ever had. We didn't expect to keep her long, when the kiddy was a week or two old. She was engaged to a sergeant in Jack's—my son's—troop, and was to have been married very soon. Martin was his name. But just then Geronimo got going. Sergeant Martin was one of those who went with Jack when he was sent in command of the escort of those accursed wagons—you know the story. Mary has been faithful to his memory ever since, and will be, to the end."

We walked on in silence. I did indeed know the story, but I never before had heard Redfield refer to it. Jack Redfield had been sent to guard some supply wagons for the post at which he was stationed. The burned wagons, with the bodies of Jack and two others, had told the tale of what had happened. The others of his little command never had been heard of. The Indians had carried them off, and it was best not to try and imagine what became of them finally, if one could help it. The shock had killed Jack's young wife, and so Philly had been left alone in the world, save for her grandfather.

No word was spoken until we reached the drafting-pens into which the four horses had been turned. I. C. was not with them, however. With Philly standing close by, gazing up at him with rapt attention, he was sitting on the fence of another pen, a short distance away, which contained a single horse. This horse was a magnificent brute, a red roan, and nearly seventeen hands high. Never, in all the corrals in my charge have I seen one like him-indeed, I have rarely seen his equal anywhere. At this time, his nose was tucked within the arms of I. C., who fondled him, uttering the while little, inarticulate sounds, such as a woman might, to a baby. And the horse, in his own way, responded.

Redfield saw Philly first, and heaved a sigh of relief; then he caught sight of the horse, and stopped short. He glanced at the four in the other corral, and then back at the big roan.

"How on earth did he ever come to be in the Q. M. corrals? I want him for

one of mine."

I sat down on that proposition hard. "Rather not!" said I. "Why, that beast has killed one man, and there's another in hospital now that he put there."

"Nonsense!" he replied, and then I feared that I'd clinched the matter by rousing his pride. There's no better horseman in the army than Redfield.

"I tell you, he's an outlaw," I persisted. "He's in that corral now waiting for a board to condemn him. I'd have him shot, if I could,"

"Nonsense!" repeated Redfield scornfully. "He looks like an outlaw,

doesn't he?"

Extending his left hand, he stepped toward the big roan quietly, as men do who understand horses, and wish to make friends with them, but this horse was different from others. Rolling his eyes around, he saw the approach of the stranger. Instantly he jerked his head free so violently that I. C., unprepared, had to cling to the fence in order not to be flung to the ground. The horse squealed like a pig, flattened his ears, and snapped so quickly that it was only the instinctive counter-movement of an old swordsman that saved Redfield's fingers. As it was, the white teeth closed, as a steel trap closes, a scant inch away.

With a switch that he carried—swagger-sticks were not used then, in this country-Redfield cut the beast savagely across the nose. He reared and struck at the fence with his fore-hoofs, as though to break his way through it to us. Snatching Philly up with one hand, and swinging her behind him, Redfield stood ready with the switch -his only weapon-raised. But there was no need to use it. I. C. dropped to the ground, inside the corral, and called gently. The roan hesitated for a moment and then stepped mincingly up to the twisted little man, and placed his smarting nose in the hand held out to

receive it.

"He wouldn't have hurt her, sir," said I. C. quietly. "I doubt, though, if he'll do for the colonel's use, yet. He's not acquainted. But I can cure him of all this, sir, if I might have time to try.'

And he looked at us wistfully.

"By Jove, I believe you-I never in my life saw anything done better!" cried Redfield, with unwonted enthusiasm. "You could tame anything that ever looked through a bridle, I think. Try, by all means. What say you, Drake?"

I agreed, readily enough. The horse was far too good for Uncle Sam to lose if it could be avoided. Then and there I gave orders that I. C., from that time on, should have entire control of the outlaw. It was the packmaster to

whom I happened to speak.

"I reckon no one won't interfere, major," he said, rubbing his ribs in a reminiscent manner. "But I'll stand ready to chip in fer the funer'l, with the rest." Then he added, in an aside to one of his men who stood near: "I tried to do sunthin with that ther hawse myself once. An' if I can't, ther ain't no other civilian what can. And sure no soldier.'

The four horses selected by I. C. were all that he claimed for them-a little rough, of course, from knocking about in the corral, but that was all. We ordered them taken to my stable, and then started for the office to make out the receipts. Philly, holding her grandfather's hand, skipped gaily along by his side, turning from time to time in order to wave a farewell to I. C., who stood looking wistfully after her as long as she was in sight.

"You seem to have made a new friend, Philly," her grandfather said as we turned the corner. Philly nodded

emphatically.

"He's lovely, Dad's Dad. He knows all about animals, and he was telling me. He says that it's exercise that fat ones need; not medicine." Here she looked, in a speculative way, at me. My figure, I regret to say, runs somewhat to-well, embonpoint. But politeness restrained her from making any allusion to the fact. "Do yo. suppose, Dad's Dad," she went on, "that if I should take that little dog for a long run every day, he-

Here her grandfather hastened to interrupt her, and explain with much detail and emphasis that on no account was she to take any notice of this animal, no matter what his ailments might be. I have rarely known Redfield to be more explicit. And at last Philly re-

luctantly promised.

Perhaps it was the great love of animals which they possessed in common that made I. C. fall down and worship this child; perhaps it was merely the affliction on one side and innocent sympathy on the other. But whatever the cause, the friendship between Philly

and this battered remnant of a man grew surprisingly. Redfield had much to attend to in the following days, as a man must in taking over charge of even the best-organized post. And Fort San Nicolas, under the Halkett régime,

had left much to be desired.

At first, despite his many duties, Redfield watched I. C. closely; but as his single-hearted devotion to Philly showed itself in his every act, he became tacitly accepted as nurse, pro tem, vice Mary, absent on leave. In fact, he seemed to consider himself as a Redfield henchman. The colonel kept his horses in my stable, which was more convenient than those of the cavalry, and he had none of his own. I. C. constituted himself attendant to these horses, greatly to the delight of the man whose duty it really was. There was little to be done in the corrals in those days, but I. C.'s share of that little never was slighted.

In the course of time a third was admitted to this strange friendship. It was the outlaw horse—Blazes, as Philly had christened him. Of course this did not take place with her grandfather's consent, or mine. Not that it ever had been forbidden. So insane an idea as that such a thing could occur never had crossed either of our minds, and so it was effected without our knowl-

edge.

I shall not soon forget the first time that this triple friendship became apparent to me. I had been inspecting the corrals and was riding slowly homeward when a shout made me look around. Then I saw the packmaster, pale under his tan, running toward a pen, upon the fence of which I. C. was leaning, watching Philly, alone inside with that outlaw horse. The sight made me sick with fear. I wheeled my mount and spurred back, though what I intended to do I had no idea, nor have I yet.

Still, the outlaw was not behaving as does an ugly horse; even then I noticed that. With his tail held high, he was galloping around his corral, now and then making little dashes at Philly. When she clapped her hands and

screamed with joyful excitement, he would toss his head, shy violently as though frightened, and gallop on again. Finally it filtered through my amazed brain that this was pure play-that these two were on intimate, not to say affectionate terms. Also, I had the deep discernment to see that the less interference there was, the safer for Philly as well as every one else. Therefore, though still swallowing hard to keep my heart from popping into my mouth, I pulled in my horse, and shouted to the packmaster an order to stop. But he did not hear. With more pluck than discretion, he vaulted the fence. Then he instantly returned to the lane. Blazes had attended to that.

Not that Blazes ran at him, biting, and striking with his fore-hoofs, after the usual custom of man-killing horses. Perhaps he thought such methods too violent to be used when Philly was present. He simply whirled like a flash, and kicked that man through the corral gate. And the gate was closed, too.

I was exceedingly annoyed. The man was an excellent packmaster, and for many weeks he lay in hospital, in a cot alongside that occupied by the other victim of Blazes. The two, I was informed, spent a large part of their time telling each other their opinions of that horse.

Naturally, I spoke severely to I. C. about this affair, but it did no good. Severity only drove what was left of his mind into incoherent wanderings like those occasioned by Redfield's inquiries. Still he managed to say that Philly was in no danger; that the horse was not a mean one, only bad-tempered with those whom he disliked or did not know. And indeed, this was true. Still, as the two classes included every one except Philly and I. C., I could not see that the United States government was likely to benefit much from the taming of this horse. To introduce him to the entire army would take too long.

For a while the queer, three-sided comradeship flourished greatly. The friends would take long rides together, out over the prairie; I. C. on Blazes, sit-

ting on a battered saddle, without stirrups, for stirrups would have been worse than useless for his twisted legs. Sometimes Philly rode behind him, but more frequently she was mounted on a pony, a bright bay, that he had "gentled" for her. There was no danger in these rides. Even had there been any one who would have interfered with them-which there was not-Blazes, at short range, would have been as good a protection as a machine-gun. Philly, who had been placed on a horse about the time she began to walk, always could ride; but never, to her grandfather's huge delight, as she learned to under the tutelage of I. C.

Time wore on. The quarterly issue of rations to the Indians once more was under way when Mary returned. Then there was a period of trouble for poor Philly—and for Mary, too. Unused for so long to the restraint imposed by that kindly, choleric Irishwoman. Philly resented it even more than she had formerly done. But worst of all, something seemed to have changed I. C.

In my opinion it was jealousy that ailed him. I happened to be present when Mary, the day after her return, called Philly in to dinner. Philly was with I. C., at the time. He looked up, and catching sight of the caller, stood for a moment as though dazed and then limped away, muttering, not to appear again that day or the next, though his imperious little friend sought him disconsolately. Worst of all, as Philly tearfully confided to me, when at last she did find him, he was not in the least like himself, but seemed to have something on his mind, and kept talking to himself and looking away into space as though expecting to see something invisible to others. She was sure that something was going to happen, she said. And she was right.

That evening I was sitting on my veranda, as usual, looking out over the prairie at the spot where the Indians had been camping, but which was marked only by scars on the green turf left by their fires. I wondered, idly, at their going so soon; usually, when they had received their rations, they

would stop in order to eat and gamble away their three months' provisions and blankets. Still, the vagaries of these governmental wards did not especially interest me, and for the time I forgot them as Redfield, his face full of trouble, came up to me.

"Have you seen Philly, Drake?" he asked as soon as he had come close enough. "She's gone, and we can't find her, though Mary and I have looked everywhere. She isn't with I. C., I know. He's in the blacksmith-shop with one of my horses, getting him

shod."

"I haven't seen her," I answered. "I wouldn't worry, though, if I were you. There's no possible danger she could get into here at the post—and she must be here somewhere. Where else could she go to?"

"I don't know. That's what I want to find out," he replied. "Well, Brinsley? Anything wrong?" he finished sharply, addressing the adjutant who

approached.

"No, sir. That is, not anything that I'm sure of," replied Brinsley. "I don't want to cry 'wolf' of course, but I suppose you know that those Indians cleared out the minute they got their rations and stuff? They'd packed before."

"Of course I know it! Is that all?" demanded the commandant testily.

"Not quite, sir. Some of them came back afterward, and they were all bucks—not a squaw among them. I was looking through my glasses at a horse—a black horse—that was going toward the rise over which they came. The horse was ridden, but it was too far for me to see exactly by what. It didn't look like another Indian, though. But when this party came back, they chased this horse, caught it, and took it away with them on the jump. Probably it's only some of their foolishness, but I thought you ought to know."

"You're sure it was none of our

men?"

"Quite, sir. No mounted passes issued, and there've been check roll-calls. Besides, I could see well enough to tell if it had been." "It's just some Indian foolishness, then," said Redfield, impatiently turning away. Then he stopped and looked wildly around him for some avenue of escape, for he saw Mrs. Halkett, a look of pleased malice on her face, bearing down on him. I saw her, too, as did Brinsley and I. C., who had come up leading Redfield's newly shod horse. But we all were fairly cornered.

"Colonel Redfield, I fear I shall have to request a moment of your valuable time," said she, with that ghastly attempt at sarcasm of which she was so fond. "When my husband's horse is ridden away from this post at full speed—without his knowledge, it is needless to say—I think we have some right to

remonstrate.'

I saw Brinsley start, open his mouth to speak, and then shut it again. Over me a sickening fear began to steal. Redfield only smiled. He was thinking, I suppose, of the "full speed" of which Halkett's butter-ball horse would be capable. But it was a black butter-ball, if there could be such a thing. That's what startled me.

"I'm sure I'm very sorry," said Redfield. "Where was the horse when he was taken? Did you see the man who

took him?"

"The horse was tied in front of the club. I, and no one else, saw the 'man,' Colonel Redfield. That 'man' was your granddaughter, who, as near as I could tell, was riding toward the Indians, where she seems to belong. I now demand——"

Mrs. Halkett never finished that sen-

"Hold your tongue—you unutterable cat!" said Brinsley, with heartfelt earnestness, and his remark was addressed to the wife of the second in command. Then he started toward the guardhouse, running as I never before saw any one run.

"May bite nor sup niver comfort ye; may yer bed niver rest ye; may ye live without love in this wurruld an' with eternal torture in the next fer that same speech!" It was Mary who said this. Attracted by the little group, she had crossed the parade-ground.

"Niver moind, corrnil, darlin'," she continued, catching Redfield, and giving him a little shake. "Go you an get ready. I'll have a harrse saddled befure thim quarthermasther graven images finds out they're alive!"

Her rosy face had turned pale, but it showed no sign of giving way. Snatching the halter-shank of Redfield's horse from I. C., who had stood, with twitching face, staring at her, she used it to flog the animal into a fast trot, and running by his side, she led him to Redfield's quarters, where his equipments were kept, and he mechanically followed her.

When they had gone, the full meaning of what had taken place apparently penetrated the brain of I. C. He turned, and with a cry that seemed to express the anguish of a lost soul, hobbled at an almost incredible pace toward the pen where lived the outlaw.

For once, Mrs. Halkett seemed cowed and frightened by the effect of her words. I heard her sob hysterically as she went toward her husband's quarters. It seemed to me that she had received, verbally, quite all that was due an unfortunate, malicious old woman, who did not, in all probability, in the least realize what she had said. But there was no time to think of her just

then.

"To Arms," "Boots and Saddles," and "Assembly" sounded from three trumpets at practically the same time. Brinsley was very young, and had lost his head a trifle in those first moments, I suppose. Nevertheless, the post began to buzz and clatter with the orderly confusion of an alarm. White-faced women stood in the open doors of the officers' quarters, and asked each other frightened questions which none could answer, while their husbands, for the most part hooking their belts as they went, ran to their posts. The men poured out of their barracks like wasps from a disturbed nest. Two of the trumpets had stopped, but the remaining one blew "To Arms" time after time. There is something wonderfully accelerating in those notes.

I could not stay idle. All told, count-

ing mule-skinners, I had thirty men or so. I shouted an order for them to take what saddles they needed from the stores, and strap them on the backs of the first animals they could catch out of the corrals. But the orders weren't needed; already they were about it. Even little Simpson, my civilian clerk, had girded himself with two enormous pistols, and staggering under the weight of a saddle that he carried on his head, was running for the corrals.

My own horse, saddled, stood behind my quarters, ready for the evening ride which I always take on account of that embonpoint to which I already have referred. Hastily arming, I threw my-

self on his back.

Already the men were forming on the parade-ground, and back of the corrals, my own scratch troop was falling in with some semblance of order, urged by the fervent profanity of the ranking sergeant. As I rode back to join them, I saw the outlaw rise like a grasshopper at the fence of his corral, flying it with a foot to spare. He bore no saddle, but on his back I. C. sat as though glued to the red-roan hide. Turning aside for nothing, they took the fences of one corral after another, until the open prairie was reached. I shouted again and again orders to come back and join the others, but if I. C. heard, he made no sign. Riding at a tearing run straight at the rise over which the Indians had come, he passed beyond it and disappeared.

My men wheeled clumsily into column, and I led them at a canter in the trail that I. C. had taken. It was useless, I knew, to send any one after him. There was not a horse in the garrison that could begin to catch up with that which he rode, far less catch

him.

As I went I told myself over and over that those Indians must soon be overtaken; that the old black horse of Halkett's couldn't go fast enough to keep himself warm. But this failed to comfort me in the least. I knew well that those brutes would never allow themselves to be much delayed by a slow horse. They would kill or aban-

don him—and then what would they do with Philly? Of course they would have known perfectly well, had they stopped to think, that if anything happened to her, their punishment would not be of a kind that would be reported to Washington. But Indians on the war-path don't stop to think. Otherwise, in these days, they wouldn't be

on the war-path.

Behind us a bugle sang sweetly. Turning in my saddle, I saw the cavalry deploying over the green plain. Be-fore them rode Redfield; I could tell his seat even at that distance. They were coming fast, and we pushed on faster. There was no need to save the stock; the mountains for which the Indians must head, were but a bare twelve miles away. I, with my men behind me, pushed straight for them by the nearest route. Redfield followed the trail of the party that Brinsley had seen. I knew. as well as though I had heard the order given, that Redfield had sent all available men who were not with him or me, to head off the savages should they attempt to turn to one side or another. But our great hope was to get them before they could reach those hills. Once in there, and it might be weeks -months, possibly-before they could be dislodged.

On and on we rode, while the dusk came down, only to be dispelled by the brilliant moon, and no sound reached our ears save the muffled drumming of the hoofs. It was not long, though it seemed so, that the foot-hills, which rose directly from the plain, towered over us. No Indians were in sight, so we halted in the deep shadows to breathe our horses before riding to the right or left to join one of the other

divisions of our force.

Then, from our right, came a party of Indians, eighty or a hundred strong. They rode parallel to the hills, and as they threaded through moonlight and alternate shadow, they passed not more than sixty yards from where we rested. Evidently they had been hard pressed, for their ponies were jaded.

I ordered no move as yet. If this was the band that had Philly, we could

hope to retake her, unharmed, only by a surprise. If it was not the gang, I would let it pass and then follow, knowing that soon or late it would join the others. But, as it turned out, there was no need for that. Next to the last of the procession came Halkett's black horse, now gray with dust and sweat, each breath that he drew a sob. On his back, pale as the moon itself, Philly sat huddled in a pathetic little heap. Behind them rode an Indian, lashing the horse and sometimes, through carelessness, the child, with a heavy quirt.

There was a little stir in the short line of men behind me. Saddles creaked, and I could hear the click of hammers as they were cocked. The men well knew that I dared not break the silence by giving a preliminary command for the charge that was intended. All longed for the word that would start us, I think, as I longed to give it. So far as I was concerned, the waiting had got on my nerves. But that charge, like many others, was not to

come off as planned.

I was about to give the word when suddenly, from the darkness of the shadows behind us, there came a scream such as I had heard before only in nightmares. On our left, a slope of talus lay full in the moonlight. Down this slope, so steep that a man would have had to use his hands in ascending, I. C. rode like a whirlwind. His hat was gone, and on his head there shone a hairless spot, darker than the rest, that I recognized instantly; the man had been scalped. In his right hand he waved something curved that glittered. It was a sickle, I afterward found, and his only weapon. But he needed no weapons.

Flashing from the shadows as he had, and sweeping down where it seemed that no mortal man could go, his twisted face and limbs made doubly ghastly by the weird moonlight that showed them, he was a fearsome sight even to us who knew him. To the Indians he was an

avenging wraith.

For an instant they stood, paralyzed; then some one shrieked, and that broke the spell. With yells that rivaled I. C.'s own, they broke and scattered like the pieces of a bursting shell. They never looked back. Had they done so, they would have seen the specter vanish in shadows at the foot of the slope as it had emerged from the other above.

In their terror, and their effort to escape from the unknown, they had left the black horse and his burden to their fates. With a shout that was intended to be reassuring, I spurred out. Looking up, Philly saw me. She gave a pitiful little cry, and held out her arms to me as a baby might have done, and as mine closed around her, picking her from the saddle, her muscles relaxed,

and she fainted dead away.

Those Indians soon forgot their fear of the apparition, I fancy. They had something else to think about. On their right a bugle sounded; others from the left and front answered it. For a few seconds the savages bunched as a flock of birds, when fired into, sometimes does. Then they broke for the hills, where a smashing volley from my men met and stopped them. Dismounting, I tucked Philly's limp little form behind a rock just as carbines, firing at will, began to rattle on the other three sides.

"Look out for the child! For God's sake look out for the child!" I heard

some one shout.

"She's safe! Safe as a church! Fire away!" I bawled in return. A wild cheer answered me, and the volume of

fire increased.

With Redfield riding at its head, and an ambulance rattling behind it, a troop galloped in column between us and the Indians. It halted, dismounted, formed line and advanced. The Indians, surrounded, fought like cornered rats, and their death-songs began to rise. Redfield threw himself from his horse, and before he had time to ask questions, I lifted Philly, still fainting, and placed her in his arms. Then I went to look for I. C.

He soon was found. Found at the bottom of an eight-foot drop that gave from the bottom of that slope down which he had ridden, lying crushed and apparently dead under the body of the roan outlaw. He was not dead, however. The ambulance came up with a doctor on its front seat, while Mary, white but determined, descended from the rear, a carbine gripped in her fist. The shadows had retreated as the moon rose, and when I. C. had been dragged from under the horse, he lay in the light. We all stood gathered around while Chester, the doctor, after listening to I. C.'s heart, forced open his mouth and poured some brandy into it. I. C. swallowed convulsively, looked around him and then made an effort to sit up. "Mary!" he called. "Oh, Mary!"

With a sobbing cry, Mary had dropped on her knees beside him. "Terence—Terence Martin! Have ye

come back to me afther all?"

Gathering him into her arms, she rocked him to and fro, as she might have rocked Philly, calling his name the while. But no response came. For the time Terence Martin had slipped back among the shadows.

With gentle force, Chester took him from her, and laying him down, made a hurried examination amid the dead silence of the plains at night. For the firing had ceased; there was no further

occasion to continue it.

Except with her eyes, Mary asked no question when the examination was finished, but Chester understood this ques-

tion, and answered it.

"I'm sorry—dead sorry," said he.
"He may become conscious again before the—the end. I think he will, but
I don't know. But he mustn't be moved
—he's horribly crushed."

Tearless, and without a break in her voice, Mary spoke. "W'u'd—could ye l'ave me have him, sorr, fer the time what remains?" she asked of Redfield.

There was but one possible answer to this request. A guard was set, well out of earshot, and we went back to the post.

It was long before I fell asleep, and the sun showed noon when I was awakened by Brinsley, who was sha-

king me.

"Hello! What's the matter? How's Philly?" I asked, sitting up and rubbing my eyes. Then I saw that Mary,

dressed in black, stood beside the adju-

"I'm sorry, Mary," I said, extending my hand. "I know it doesn't help, but I'd like you to know it."

She took the hand and pressed it. "It's not sorry, but glad I am, sorr," said she. "Didn't I have him wance more fer a little while, when I never thought I could, in this wurruld? It's

about him we've come."

"You see, it's like this," explained Brinsley. "Philly's in a high fever, though Chester says she'll be all right in a day or two. But the colonel's with her; so one can't appeal to him now. Now, Sergeant Martin never was discharged, and certainly he didn't desert. What happened to him among the Indians and how he escaped, he couldn't tell, though he tried."

"Oh, don't talk about that, sorr-don't!" begged Mary, and her lips be-

gan to tremble.

"I won't. There's no need. But what I think is, that, as he clearly died in the line of duty, he certainly is entitled to the funeral of his rank."

"Naturally," I agreed. "There are uniforms and chevrons in the stores. Let Mary have what she wants."

"It isn't that, but you know how Halkett would behave if we left such a matter to him, and he referred it to his wife, as he would. And as we can't go to the colonel to get this signed—""

He did not finish the sentence, but laid a typewritten paper on my bed.

I took it and read it. It was an order, such as would naturally be read out on dress-parade, speaking of Sergeant Martin and the fact that he died in action. I handed it back.

"It may be forgery, Brinsley, but there are times when not to commit for-

gery is a sin," said I.

And so it was signed: "By order Colonel Redfield, commanding post. Frederick Brinsley, lieutenant and adjutant."

So in this way, by the last respect due his rank, the mystery of I. C. was solved for all men, and it was the soul of Sergeant Martin that fared forth to the greatest mystery of all.





OMETIMES I envy women who have no sense of their responsibilities!"

Mrs. Waring put down the telephonereceiver and sighed deeply as she turned to her work.

Her husband made no sign, beyond a smile in her direction, and kept on with the game of patience that he was playing at the other end of the room.

The sudden giving up of a dinnerparty had left Mr. and Mrs. Waring with an evening on their hands and, contrary to precedent, it had been the lady who frowned upon a suggestion of the theater and decided that they stay at home.

"Why I call it providential," she had "My lists aren't half made declared. out, and to-morrow is Election Day. I've got to start very early and see hundreds of women, I should say, besides voting myself, which I'm nervous about of course because I've never done it before! If I don't do it, however, that horrible Mrs. Belcher will probably be elected to the school-board again. She turned out very differently than was expected, I believe; though I must confess it seems queer to me that, after they've worked so hard to get a woman on, they should have to work even harder to get her off! But I dare say I don't understand. men like that, Manton? Now you see, don't you, why I feel that I must sacrifice everything to my duty?"

So, in a fine attitude of resignation, Mrs. Waring, with the sleeves of a bewildering blue peignoir turned back from her round wrists, had seated herself, immediately after dinner, at a desk in the library and had given herself over to nearly half an hour of labor, punctuated by frequent appeals to the telephone.

Presently she tossed aside her pencil and turned squarely around in her chair.

"I said, Manton, that I envy women who have no sense of responsibility!"

The repetition of these words bore so spirited an emphasis that, this time, her husband turned, too, and yielded an undivided attention.

"What's the matter now?" he asked. Mrs. Waring's answer came in a tone

of sharp surprise.

"I really believe that you've not been listening!" she protested. "Haven't you heard me call up six different women for advice and find that not a single one of them is at home except Mrs. Tony Ellery, who is giving a dinner and can't be disturbed? Don't you think it's queer of her not to have asked us, when we've had her here dozens of times? Though in the face of larger issues, I hope I am not one to make much of details!

"You remember, Manton," Mrs. Waring went on, "that I joined the Ladies' Pure Government Club last month and, of course, I register at the city hall the very next day so as to be able to vote for the school-board tomorrow. Although 'twas rather horrid and conspicuous, it's a simpler matter than you'd think; for all you have to do is to answer some foolish questions and show that you can read, when they hand you a card with something from the Bible printed on it in enormous letters.

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"I got the queerest verse, rather rude of them, I thought, under the circumstances, and Mrs. Launcelot Buttress, who was with me, thought so, too. 'Twas something about letting 'the women learn in silence with all subjection,' and a man at a desk, a very disagreeable old person in spectacles, was uncivil enough to look up and

laugh!

"Oh, no; we are not suffragettes! How can you suggest such a thing? We are awfully nice women; people you know-why, Cousin Mary Dolliner is the chairman. We have decided, after much deliberation, to enter public life for two reasons. The point is that we may have some voice in the education of our children-for you can't deny that mothers are women, Manton Waring-and the second is even more important. It isn't generally known, and perhaps you'd better not speak of it carelessly, but we are pledged to prevent the reelection to the board of that dreadful Mrs. Alemena Belcher,

"She's even worse than her name, Manton, and she's made lots of trouble because she's hateful and common besides being a grafter—whatever that may mean—and a person whom no one can believe under oath! So this club has been formed—of the very nicest women, as I've told you—for the express purpose of keeping her off the board this year, by hook or by crook!"

"'By crook' is what I call good politics." Waring's shout of laughter interrupted gaily. "Especially if you don't get caught!" He had abandoned his game and now stood, with an arm about his wife, looking over her shoulder. "Don't let them make a catspaw of you, Gussie," he teased. "Above all things, don't let them put you on the stump! It's hard work: I speak from experience. Really, I believe those lists of yours are engagements for speeches! Let me see."

He reached for one of the papers on the desk; but his wife cried out, as she covered it quickly with both hands: "No! No! Please, Manton, please don't look! They are just memoranda," she explained, "names of persons I've

got to see to-morrow morning and make them vote, you know, all arranged by street and number. It's lucky that the new motor came last week, isn't it? And I have put down—I mean to be businesslike—a few other things; questions that I wanted to ask the other members.

"But what's the use"—Mrs. Waring's voice grew plaintive as the memory of her wrongs mounted—"when not a single woman of the whole committee except myself seems to be giving the slightest attention to her responsibility? So, if you'd been listening you'd have heard me say that I ency them because, while they amuse themselves, I have to do all the work, and I may even be forced to decide a most important question entirely alone."

"Can't I help you?" Waring sug-

gested.

His wife laughed softly to herself; then she turned a mysterious little smile toward her husband.

"No, I don't believe you can. But perhaps—" She hesitated an instant; then caught herself quickly. "What nonsense!" she spoke with decision. "Of course, you can't. It's entirely out of your line and, if you don't mind my saying so, dear, you're much too stupid!"

"Try me and see; you put me on

my mettle," Waring persisted.

But his wife started at the sound of the telephone-bell.

"Please let go of my hands," she begged.

Then she added with that touch of intuitive prophecy which is the strange birthright of her sex:

"I know it's Cousin Mary Dolliner!"
She was right. But to Waring, as he lay back in his chair listening in idle amusement to the half of the conversation open to him, it seemed that his wife not only took pains to conceal the subject under discussion—an easy matter, as Mrs. Dolliner's replies came evidently in response to a question already asked—but grew, as the talk progressed, less and less in accord with the other's point of view. She passed

quickly from the affirmative stage, through the doubtful, to the politely combative.

And, a moment later, after a studiously affectionate "Good-by" he was not surprised to hear her cry of annoyance as she hung up the receiver.

"That's the last time I shall ever ask advice of any one?" She turned to him with flashing eyes. "And I took such pains to send her a note about it this afternoon—Cousin Mary Dolliner, I mean! Just think, Manton, she tells me that I ought to dress very plainly when I go to drum up my people and vote to-morrow. She even suggests—and you know, yourself, how horrid Cousin Mary's suggestions always are—that I wear a 'rainy-day suit,' whatever that may be! The idea! When I've just had the sweetest gown made expressly for the purpose!

"Oh, dear! There, I didn't mean to tell you yet. That's what I was so mysterious about a moment ago. I meant it for a sort of surprise; but you don't mind, do you? For it was a bargain and cost only a hundred and fifty

dollars!

"But what can you expect of any one, as stout as she is, who parts her hair and wears those health-waists, that don't even touch you anywhere, and full skirts, and 'comfort' shoes? Small wonder that she looks like an escaped sofa! And, if she had her way, she'd make me look as odd as herself, only in a different way, I hope!

"I don't blame men—I can't—for not letting women vote on important matters, because most of them are such perfect frights, the ones that want the ballot! But all this is going to be changed. Wait till you see me, Man-

ton!

"Why isn't now a good time? Let's leave these tiresome lists, I'm sure they're right enough, and you shall come up-stairs and I'll put on my new frock to show you! Ring for Vachot, please, like a dear boy, and, while you're there just look at the weather-indications in the paper. Not that I care much what they say, for I'm perfectly sure that to-morrow will be fine,

in spite of Cousin Mary Dolliner. 'Rainy-day suit,' indeed!"

II.

It was already noon when Mrs. Waring reached her voting-place on Election Day. The morning which, true to her prediction, chose to disregard the gloomy threats of the weather bureau and to disclose a fairness that matched the fresh splendors of her own appearance, had been a busy one.

Her start was most auspicious. Clad in the new gown and borne by the new motor, she had embarked on a new enterprise; and her enthusiasm ran high, as she held her lists in a delicately gloved hand and glanced complacently through a spotted veil at the packages of cards and circulars beside her.

"I am sorry that you must go alone," Cousin Mary Dolliner, as chairman of the committee, had given her instructions in a deep ex-cathedra voice, "but it seems out of the question, in view of the amount of work before us, to spare any one else. And, really, Augusta, your duties are easy. If possible see in person the women whose names are on the lists, and talk to them as you have been told. If they are out and have not already voted, simply leave one of our little 'reminder cards'; but, if you find that any of the names have a star against them you will kindly leave in addition one of the 'explanatory leaflets."

At the outset all had gone well. Indeed, the first calls, which happened to be on enthusiastic supporters, were agreeably protracted; and it was nearly eleven when Mrs. Waring began, as her car of triumph turned into less familiar districts, to experience a series of rebuffs that in contrast seemed over-

whelming.

"I've got enough to do with my own housework," snapped one grimy woman as she leaned her bare arms on a broomhandle. "It's all very well for folks like you to meddle in what I call men's business; but votin' don't wash no dishes nor mend no socks nor cook no dinner as far as I c'n see! And how

under the canopy you ever got hold o' my name," she concluded as she prepared to close the door, "is more'n I

c'n make out!"

The next householder proved to be a palmist and wanted to tell Mrs. Waring's fortune. One mistook her for a book-agent and another for a rent-collector; while a ponderous person fresh from the wash-tub welcomed her with wet cordiality as an evidently expected envoy of the "Sunshine Band of Shut-in Helpers," and pointed out a sour-looking old man, still in bed, on whom she was supposed to scatter some of her cheering commodity.

But worst of all was a severe and much-dressed woman in spectacles, who, from the embraces of a plush patentrocker, heard her through in silence, and then rose suddenly to declare herself Mrs. Alemena Belcher's sister and to invite her visitor to leave the house

at once!

Depressed by this encounter, Mrs. Waring, as she walked slowly down the steps with such dignity as she could command, had resolved to run no more risks. The whole undertaking seemed, of a sudden, futile and distasteful. She felt the need of sympathetic support and, to meet this change of mood, disarranged completely the plans of the committee, as resolving to cast her own vote before she even thought of another visit, she bade the chauffeur take her quickly to the polling-place.

And now, as the motor drew up at the curbing, the spirits of its occupant revived. The scene was certainly an interesting one. Crowds of men, out for their noon-hour, stood about one of the neat, little iron houses that the city puts up for use on election days. It was placed under the trees close to the sidewalk. Two plump policemen guarded its entrance and let in, after professional scrutiny, the voters who issued forth to the world again, after a decent interval, from another door, Over all shone a brilliant sun and, a block away, a hurdy-gurdy played the

Somehow Mrs. Waring felt wonderfully alive. She thrilled to the impor-

tance of an occasion so unusual and, as she stepped from the car, a sudden realization of the fact that she was the only one of her sex visible gave her a sense of dramatic isolation to which no adjective short of "delicious" could

apply.

She smiled graciously, as she pictured a triumphal progress through ranks of onlookers, standing with doffed hats. She anticipated the low obeisances of the policemen and she saw the attentions that waited for her behind those walls of iron; the flattering silence that would follow her appearance, the proffered chair, the ballots pressed upon her, and the choice of a score of eager pencils.

But, alas, before she had taken many steps, the exit door of the booth opened and a familiar figure issued forth. It was Cousin Mary Dolliner! True to her principles, that lady was plainly dressed. A felt hat, round and unadorned, surmounted the gray hair parted austerely above her lofty forehead. Her dress was of flannel, and its capacious skirt hung only to the tops of her stout and heelless boots. She had seen Mrs. Waring and hurried forward to seize her by an arm and

draw her back to the motor.

"My dear"-her usually even voice was ragged with excitement, as she seated herself by Mrs. Waring's side— "my dear, I am very glad to see you, although I didn't expect you so soon. Things are going badly with us, I'm afraid; for there's been an enormous delegation of Belcher supporters here this morning and as yet very few of our own people have turned up at all. Isn't it provoking? But I hope for a better showing this afternoon. Then I am told that there is much scratching of Murphy's name on our own ticket by the Iews, while the Irish vote is what they call 'shy' on Rosenstein. Oueer, isn't it, how illogical men are? Women are bad enough! Now, my dear, I want you to listen to me quietly, while I give you some advice as to ways and means and methods. And then do you go in at once and cast your ballot. I'll wait for you here. And I dare say," she added, as her eyes swept the other's charming figure with a look of reluctant approval, "you may possibly produce a

good effect for our cause!"

But that this effect amounted to little was Mrs. Waring's disappointed conclusion as, a few moments later, the door of the booth closed behind her. Her progress through the crowd outside had been unremarked, they seemed engrossed in their own excitements; she had been forced by the policeman to stand at the entrance until there was room inside; and now she was facing a very common-looking man, who sat at a table with a printed paper before him and, his pencil raised in air, awaited her answer to his question.

"Name and address?" he had de-

manded.

As she gave them flutteringly with a curious sense of exposure his pencil moved down the list in corroboration.

"Augusta C. Waring. 27 Pompon Avenue," he called out in a loud voice.

"August C. Waring. 27 Pompon Avenue," an even louder voice, from

another table, took up the cry. Then, with the opening of a gate, "Augusta C. Waring," in a condition of sudden confusion, her mind swept bare of all ideas save the dominating one that the reason for her presence in this horrid place was the routing of Mrs. Alemena Belcher, found herself holding a long, folded paper and confronting a line of little wooden stalls.

III.

Mr. Waring laughed aloud from behind the morning paper.

"I swear, you women can make even politics picturesque!" he called to his wife across the table.

Mrs. Waring put down her tea-cup to

interrupt excitedly.

"Oh, that means the election yesterday," she cried. "Do you know I'd almost forgotten about it, because I'm so absorbed in the bridge tournament this afternoon. Of course I don't want to hear about your stupid mayor and people like that: but tell me, tell me quickly, was Mrs. Belcher elected after all?"

"That's what I mean by picturesque," he answered. "Just listen to the heading." Then he read aloud: "'By the skin of her teeth! A single vote did the trick! Mrs. Alemena Belcher's narrow squeak! She is returned to the School-board by a plurality of one. Recount, of course, demanded."

"I never heard of such a ridiculous thing in my life!" Mrs. Waring drew a long breath and leaned forward on both elbows, her eyes wide with inter-"I don't believe it's possible! Why, I thought that pluralities were almost as large as majorities—you certainly told me so yourself-and amounted always to twenty-two hundred-andthirty-eight and things like that! Of course there's something wrong somewhere; but I assure you that woman is just mean enough to take her place on the board again and hold it! I've distrusted her, you may remember, all along. But what does a recount mean, anyway, and how could there be a mistake?"

Waring put down the paper. "Why, a recount," he explained, "is simply a counting over again to see if an error has been made. As for mistakes, they are common enough; and always occurring in lots of ways. Sometimes the voters themselves make them; men are careless about marking their ballots and, of course, nearly all you women

are inexperienced."

"What do you mean by mistakes in marking ballots?" persisted Mrs. War-

"Why, failing to follow the printed instructions, putting the crosses against the wrong names, for instance. Our present system is a simple one, but must be considered carefully; and a voter, with a long list before him, has to keep hold of his wits.'

"Oh!" remarked Mrs. Manton Waring, relapsing into sudden silence.

And it was not until some long moments had gone by, during which her husband resumed the reading of his paper, that she spoke again.

"Manton," she said, "if you don't

mind I won't go down-town with you this morning as we had planned and I think I'll telephone Lucy Ballard that I'll give up the bridge tournament, too! I don't feel—exactly well, to tell the truth, and I believe I'll lie down right after breakfast!"

The plaintive note in his wife's voice and the abrupt change of subject made Waring look up with anxious sympa-

thy.

"I'm mighty sorry, Gussie!" he declared. "But you're right to take it easy, for you've good reason to be done up. I wish you didn't try to do so many things." He shook his head with an air of conjugal sagacity. "I have been afraid all along that this political nonsense would be too much for you."

Mrs. Waring looked at him sharply,

but vouchsafed no reply.

On his return at five o'clock Waring discovered a deserted drawing-room and learned that his wife had been suffering all day with a headache and had not left the house. There was a wealth of solicitude in the butler's manner that he found himself sharing as he hurried up the stairs and, a moment later, tapped at his wife's door.

"Come in," said a faint voice.

Mrs. Waring, all pale pink and white, lay on a lounge drawn to the window. A table by her side held piles of books and magazines. Another supported a tea-tray—freshly brought—over which a vase of pale pink roses mounted guard; while a wood-fire blazed in rivalry with the western sunlight that lay in shining patches across the pale pink rug on the floor. But in this eminently cheerful mise en scène Mrs. Waring seemed a figure of pathos. She lifted her head only to drop it again to the pillow. Then she smiled wanly and sighed with evident relief.

"Oh, I am glad that it's you! For I was dreadfully afraid it might be

Cousin Mary Dolliner!"

Waring drew a chair close to his wife's side, and taking her hand in his. he regarded her with tender anxiety.

"I am sorry to find you like this,

my dear," he began. "Don't you think that you ought to see the doctor?"

Mrs. Waring shook her head, this time with a touch of vigor, and something of the same quality colored her

"Indeed I don't, Manton," she declared. "I'm not an idiot and I should have had one hours ago if I'd wanted him. I'm not ill—in that way," she added mysteriously, "but if you must know I'm just nervous because, because—well, I suppose you'll have to know some time. I've got something on my mind, though I sha'n't tell you what it is—at least I think I sha'n't—vet!"

Then she turned away her head and

laughed.

"But you do amuse me, Manton, for you look perfectly ridiculous—I wish you could see yourself in the glass—sitting there with your forehead all wrinkled up as if you thought I were going to die and holding my hands as if you were taking my pulse! Why don't you pay some attention to me? I should think that you might, at least, divert me, when you've been down-town having an interesting time, while I've been shut up here by myself all day! Tell me nice things that have happened, Manton. Isn't there any news at all?"

Waring leaned back in his chair.

"Not much," he began obediently. "I don't believe you could have picked out a worse day for news. Nobody talks of anything but the elections. They were pretty satisfactory, first and last, I think. Townsend's the best mayor we could have had and, oh"-he broke off-"that reminds me! There is a piece of political news that will interest you, Gussie! The paper was all wrong this morning about your friend -no, I beg your pardon, your enemy-Mrs. Belcher. They hadn't got the full returns and somebody evidently wanted to make a sensation. The next edition corrected it. Have you heard? It seems that Mrs. Belcher failed of her reelection to the school-board by nearly four hundred votes! Why-

He stopped abruptly, aghast at the ef-

fect he had produced; for, with a suddenness that was disconcerting, Mrs. Waring sat bolt upright. An instant later she stood on the floor. Then, lifting her skirts, her face in smiles, her eyes alight, she pirouetted across the room, singing gaily as she went; and as she passed her husband on the way back, she stopped to kiss the top of his head and to put her arms about him.

"You dear, old thing!" she cried.
"How happy I am! But are you sure?
Quite, quite sure?"

Waring held her close.

"What on earth's the matter with you, you foolish baby?" he demanded. "What do you mean? By George! You must have taken the thing to heart! Of course I'm sure! But why has this piece of news suddenly seemed to cure you? Gussie, Gussie, I believe you've been up to something! What is it? Come, confess! Explain yourself."

Mrs. Waring's head lay against her husband's shoulder. She drew a com-

fortable sigh of relief.

"Oh, I'm glad enough to explain, Manton, because you've taken such a load off my mind. It's been terrible, lying here since ten o'clock with nobody coming near me and nobody telephoning but Cousin Mary Dolliner, who suggested coming over right after breakfast, and I had a hard time putting her off-indeed, I thought you were she, when you knocked-because she was the last person on earth that I wanted to see! Why, Manton, I've felt positively disgraced all day andthough my intention was good and you have always told me that counted for a something in law-responsible!"

"Disgraced? Responsible? Responsible for what?" Waring's look was puzzled as he interrupted her. "I don't

understand!"

"Why, for everything," Mrs. Waring hurried on. "I must say 'twas dull of you not to see! Why, it came over me like a flash of lightning this morning when you read of Mrs. Belcher's election and explained something about mistakes in voting, that, perhaps, I'd made a sort of mistake myself—I suppose I did—and if that terrible woman had got in by one vote as they claimed, why, I should be entirely responsible. Just think of that; wasn't it enough to make any one ill and do you blame me?

"Though, in simple justice to myself, I must say it was a good deal Cousin Mary Dolliner's fault for, before I could head her off yesterday, she got into the motor and sat and talked to me for hours and said such a lot of things about 'scratching' and 'combining' and I don't know what that by the time I got into that queer voting-place with all those men shouting your name, I

was perfectly confused.

"No, Manton, of course I didn't read the instructions on the ballot! Why should I when I took it for granted that Cousin Mary Dolliner had told me everything? I suppose I was nervous-you can't blame me-and I had just one thought in my mind, to keep that Mrs. Alemena Belcher off the school-board! So I marched straight into one of those little pens-by the way they're much too narrow for any decent hat—and, when I found her name on the paper, just as I supposed it would be at the very top of the list, I took my pencil and made a big black cross against it!

"Manton Waring, why are you laughing at me? Of course I was wrong. I acknowledge it willingly, though as matters now stand I can't see that it made the *least* difference! Do you know I am more and more convinced that men are pretty stupid? Really, Manton, why isn't it exactly as sensible to cross out a name you don't want to yote for, as to cross in one that you do? Can you answer that perfectly simple

question?"







HERE were a good many things I did not like, but then when one comes to a house wherein he has not set foot for a year and where another man has meanwhile begun to pervade the atmos-

phere, striding about with a semiproprietary note ringing offensively from the very jingle of his spurs and the very tread of his boots, one must anticipate that. But what I did not like most was the palpable, if submerged, sympathy of all except this new man; his manner was aggressively triumphant. Their hand-clasps seemed to say: "Poor boy, we know you loved Jane." His glance said: "Well, you got yours."

Of the two the condolence was the worse. Only the most thoroughly harvevized emotions can withstand the shafts of gratuitous sympathy.

If the heathen knew what heaps of it are showered on his matted head he would rush screaming to civilization and benevolently assimilate it, to escape the pity of Christendom.

Obviously I could not come out and say: "Dear, good folk, your condolence is unnecessary. No flowers, pleasethere is Elizabeth of whom you have no information, but of whom I have a sustaining and consoling knowledge my-I am merely here to rummage among a few frustrate ghosts of the past with your very charming Jane and hold a post-mortem on our mutually defunct attachment. I shall only borrow her for a brief space."

No. decidedly, I could not say that, though it would have vastly illuminated

the situation.

Instead I told them about Europe, a place of which they had all heard, and how the trip across had been choppy, and how I hardly knew which way my errant footsteps were next to turn, and who had married and given in marriage and given up in marriage since my departure on my personally conducted tour of forgetting commenced. And all the while in the kindly blue eyes of the mother and the aunts, I could read the conviction that I had found the waters of Lethe ineffectual.

Plainly the conviction at the club that it was a go was not groundless, despite the delay of the announcement. Jane, too, was attractive beyond all reason for a girl engaged to a third party. Girls engaged to third parties should forfeit their charms, it would make things better all around, and yet perhaps I was a third party to some one in the case of Elizabeth.

After dinner it happened that Fitz Hughes and I-Fitz Hughes was the man with the disagreeably proprietary manner-sat all alone over our cigars on the veranda and bored each other with conversation. The rest of the household were indoors. We did not speak of Jane.

"How long are you staying?" he inquired too casually.

"Can't say," I replied just casually enough. "My plans are adrift."

"Ah," he replied, and fell to gazing at the great dipper and listening to the whippoorwills in the wooded hills behind the house.

Finally Fitz Hughes went inside to look for tobacco, or write a sonnet, or change his necktie, I forgot exactly what, and left me alone; and then it happened that Jane came out.

I thanked Heaven for Elizabeth when Jane and I met in the moonlight. When you have loved a girl as I had undertaken to love Jane, you can only get her out of your system by turning in another girl to chase her out. To-night Jane was radiant in a shimmery pink gown, of style improperly styled princess. It should be empress or huggable, or something expressive, for the type seems designed to lure the masculine arm about the waist, and there was a rose in her hair.

A rose in the hair has always seemed to me warrant enough for kissing the wearer. The thought that came to me with Jane's appearance was that except for Elizabeth I should have been in danger of a precipitate relapse. But then except for the thought of Elizabeth I should never have trusted myself in the presence of this young sor-

ceress.

It was Jane, herself, who suggested a stroll. I was accessory only in neglecting to decline. It was Jane who acted as guide, and it was chargeable entirely to her thoughtlessness that we found ourselves at last in a somewhat deserted summer-house in a rather remote corner of the grounds, where the honeysuckle freighted the air, and the shadow of the surrounding wall threw our refuge into blackness, though the world in general was swimming in the blue and silver bath of the moon.

We were alone save for a small and melancholy owl that seemed to have no Elizabeth in his allotment of life. This, then, was the place where I was to bid farewell to the past dynasty of love and tell Jane about Elizabeth and ask her blessing on my newer and wider love.

Very well. The king is dead! Long

live the king!

I lighted my pipe. It was an old brier-root that I used to have here—though I had not smoked it since I loved and wooed and lost Jane. I told myself sentimentally that it was a very fitting censer to light a burned-out devotion.

We talked for a time of friends concerning whom we were mutually indifferent, while I rather pleasantly pictured Fitz Hughes searching like young Lovell for his temporarily lost lady. Pleasantly, I say, because even though one has resigned, one enjoys, if he be naturally combative, the embarrassment of his successor.

"Don't let me play quarantine officer too long," I suggested, "Where one has had number three pinned on him he is apt to do that, and I could not under the circumstances be expected," I added

courteously, "to know what is too

long."

I could feel her amused gaze through the darkness. I sustained the stare as gallantly as possible for one who had been weighed and found wanting. I wished, secretly, that I had pulled out of my own accord during one of the many wrathful occasions that had preceded my compulsory retirement. In that event the net result would have been the same and I should have had the alleviating memory of having come off with the honors of war.

It is disconcerting to have a lady stare at one till one feels the rather unflattering, half-pitying thoughts back of the very attractive eyes one sees in the tempered light of a summer-house. I was rather glad when she spoke. I might hold my own with dignity in conversation, but I was plainly worsted in

the silences.

"You assume that we are engaged," she said at last. "What makes you so positive?"

I dislike evasions, but I met her with

equal vagueness.

"We is an ambiguous term," I replied reflectively. "It might, for example, mean you and I, in which case——"

"Don't be silly," she commanded.
"We, in the sense I used it, means Mr.

Fitz Hughes and myself."

"You interrupted me," I resumed blandly. "I was just about to eliminate the first proposition as improbable, and arrive by more deliberate logic at the same conclusion."

"And having arrived there?"

"I should have admitted that I had not allowed myself the liberty of drawing conclusions," I declared virtuously. "Nevertheless, you have allowed yourself to draw exactly that conclusion." She spoke with the severity of one who had tripped a criminal.

I assumed the air of an unwilling

witness sparring for time.

"Possibly I have been unconsciously influenced by the—er—the gossip at the

club since my return."

Even in the dimness of our retreat I was conscious of a blaze breaking out in her eyes, but, as the Fire Department would report, it was immediately under control, though smoldering.

"So you men discuss my affairs over your high-balls, do you? And you permit it—probably even enjoy it!" Her tone was magnificently contemptuous.

I shrugged my shoulders. "I don't have to incriminate myself," I evaded.

"There is no engagement," she announced indignantly, "and the next time that the gentlemen of your club discuss me along with their whisky, you will oblige me by so announcing on my authority. If I thought you had nerve enough I would ask you to add what I think of talking about a girl in a grill-room."

Trees silhouette themselves against a moonlit sky-line in fantastic shapes, and just at that moment I became much absorbed in some foliage masses that bore a marked resemblance to a Teddy bear waving its paws at a walrus.

"Will you do as I ask?" she demand-

ed imperiously.

I turned quickly. "Certainly," I assented with affability. "Any gentleman will—will say anything to suit a lady's convenience. Of course," I added casually, "you will stand for it at the Final Reckoning. My own fund of indulgence may be somewhat overdrawn without it."

She tossed her head with evident annoyance. "Why do you insist upon ir-

ritating me?" she demanded.

I did not venture a reply. In point of fact she was very attractive when irritated, and heretofore during our acquaintance I had not had the hardihood to incur the risk of angering her. Now I intended to enjoy it. Finally it occurred to me to talk again.

"You see," I suggested, "not know-

ing the exact status of affairs as to you and this Mr. Fitz Patrick——"

"Mr. Fitz Hughes," she corrected in-

cisively.

"Ah yes, I stand corrected. You ought to know—well, of Mr. Fitz Hughes, I have no option but to assume the most probable thing."

"If you were interested," she suggested icily, "one way to find out would

be to ask."

"Do you think," I queried evenly, "that just because a man has happened to make love to a girl for some few years, it gives him a life-membership in an inquisitors' club?"

"It seems to me that if his vows had had the merit of sincerity he would feel a curiosity about that particular

girl," she retorted.

"It seems to me that if that particular girl felt any friendship for that man she would make him the recipient of her confidence unasked; and that if she did not he would have no right to pry," I announced.

"It seems to me that if he did not have the enterprise to inquire the confidence would be sadly misplaced."

The last supposition was frigid and conducive to silence. The silence ensued.

"Swinburne says," I at last observed irrelevantly, "'Love that lasts an hour, and life that lasts a day.'"

"You and Swinburne seem to differ," she vouchsafed distantly, "chiefly in your relative aptitude of expression."

My eyes wandered off beyond the Teddy bear and the walrus, beyond the portion of the sky where Ursus Major dwells, to a point where I seemed to see Elizabeth's more merciful face.

"Oh, I dare say I should have gone on loving you vainly, helplessly and—well, loyally if—if——" My voice trailed off after my eyes until it lost itself in the distance,

Jane sat up suddenly. Some things always interest a woman, no matter to

whom they happen.

"There is another girl!" she announced solemnly, with the air of discovery.

There was a hint of astonishment in

the voice, too, though why so natural a phenomenon should occasion it left

me at a loss.

"Why—well——" I stammered and then busied myself with my pipe which I discovered did not draw freely or drew too freely, or was in some manner unsatisfactory. A conscientious diagnosis of the ailments of a pipe may well occupy a man's attention while he recovers a shaken equilibrium of mind. I relighted it nervously.

"Oh, say, now aren't you a bit premature?" I asked, seeking refuge in

haphazard equivocation.

"There is another girl!" she cried, with a triumph of one unmasking a fraud, "Don't attempt to deny it! Your confusion is complete!"

I bit resolutely on my pipe-stem and

turned on her defiantly.

"Well," I admitted doggedly, "suppose I grant it. Suppose there happens to be——"

She laughed. In fact, I have never heard her laugh quite so merrily about anything that was really funny.

"It vindicates my reputation as a prophet," she exulted, "and you derided my ability to read your future. You could never change! Your devotion was non-shrinkable! •It could never grow less! Your love could never die!"

All this was unfair. I felt justly aggrieved. "My dear young woman," I said mildly but firmly, "genuine love is undying—almost. Like Achilles, it has its vulnerable point. It can be kicked to death. To use the parlance of the criminal, you threw the boots into it until it expired in great anguish."

She ignored the explanation. "Your love was the only durable article of the sort on the market," she went on between peals of frivolous laughter. "No refusals could daunt you; no misfortunes discourage your ardor. You were in the game till the last card was played. You were enlisted for the war. If I misquote you please correct me."

"And I knew when my Waterloo terminated the war," I amended. "Do you think a man should go on nursing a hopeless love like—well, like the Spartan boy's fox to gnaw out the vitals

of his soul?" I was conscious that while I was in the right my defense sounded feeble.

"But your love was immortal—undying—unchanging!" she argued, shaking her head with well-feigned sadness,

I recovered from my intimidation. "So it was. So it was," I rejoined, with composure. "All love is immortal—while it lasts."

"Your consistency is as unyielding as

your constancy," she declared.

"Consistency is the bugaboo of little minds," I quoted airily, glad to take refuge in the citation of authority.

"Not yours, apparently," she coun-

tered sweetly.

So affronted, I fell silent again and contemplated without excitement the moon and clouds, turning my thoughts to higher things.

"And yet," she said, with restored gravity, "I believe I am glad of it. I want to see you happy, and I should love to see you marry some—some sweet girl."

"Thank you," I said.

"I really should," she reaffirmed.

"Thank you some more," I said in a tone nicely gaged to show that though my feelings had been deeply wounded I was too courteous to intimate it.

"There is a prevalent idea," she continued, "that girls—even if they can't love a man who has—well, proposed to them—are still jealous of their successors. I want you to feel that I have no such sentiment."

"You have no sentiment," I remarked. "The man who makes a mark upon your heart must be a lapidary."

"That is nasty," she said, though

without temper.

"Not at all," I assured her. "Lapidaries engrave on precious stones. I might have said a stone-mason, had I intended to be nasty."

"Still, it was not what I call a nice compliment," she said, as though carefully weighing the comment in question.

"I did not expect to make a hit with it," I confessed. "However, I am willing to admit that you are an exceptional young person. Even with my newly raised ideals before my mind's eye."

"You are really much nicer since you left off talking sentimental nonsense," she conceded generously. "Now that it's all over, I may as well confess that some of your flowery speeches used to make me—well, just a little tired."

I nodded. "I was an awful fool,

wasn't I? I remember I used to apostrophize your sapphire eyes and the burnished copper of your hair, and talk about your cheeks being like delicately tinted rose-leaves. From my conversation one might have gathered the idea that your personal appearance was a sort of jumbled-up jeweler's shop and conservatory. As a matter of fact, looking at it all in a saner light of disillusionment, I can see that your eyes are about as blue as those of most blueeyed people; and your hair is brown with tendency toward red. I must apologize for having bored you with all those effusive speeches.'

She ought to have come forward with corroboration. She only inquired: "What does she look like—this later

acquisition?"

"Oh!" I said, with enthusiasm. "She is somewhat taller than you, and if you will pardon me, she has more grace of carriage. Her hair is as Browning puts it: "The blackest black that our eyes endure." Her eyes are the same! Her qualities of mind—"

"Oh, spare me that," she interrupted impatiently. "If I found that line of conversation wearisome when you were playing me up in the title rôle, I doubt if I can stand it at all now when there

is not even an appeal to vanity to recommend it."

"Pardon me," I apologized, in a hurt tone. "I thought you were going to take an interest in my new interests for the old days' sake."

Once more we fell into silence.

"Is she suited to you in tempera-

ment?" she asked finally.

"I assure you, we are the only genuine affinities in captivity," I replied manfully, holding my remarks down to a note of levity, lest my enthusiasm carry me away once more. "You know you have rather a nasty disposition," she suggested sweetly. "Do you think she can harmonize herself with it?"

"I!" I echoed in astonishment. "Why, I have the most docile temperament in the world! Now you, Jane—you are a bit—just the least bit hardheaded, and had we attempted to strike it off together we should have probably hit a snag, but I should have been less than half to blame."

"Oh, we would have quarreled like cat and dog," she assented. "I had the wisdom to avert that, however," she

added airily.

"Yes," I reflected, studying the stars as though I were reading there our avoided horoscope, "we should have had to put tennis-nets up in the diningroom to catch the china we should have pitched across the table after the honeymoon. Possibly the servants should have been liveried in shirts of mail. Only we could not have kept servants because you would not have been diplomatic enough with them—and you can't cook yourself."

"Cook!" she echoed incredulously. "Did you get her at an employment

agency?"

Jane can surcharge her speaking contralto with sarcasm till it makes her utterance come forth like the cork from a champagne bottle,

I spread my hands deprecatingly. "It is very frivolous of you, my dear," I commented, with self-control, "to belittle the homely virtues that make womankind admirable. There was a time when I fancied that you were not merely a butterfly-type and an exceedingly good advertisement for your dressmaker—by the way that gown is becoming, decidedly so!"

She declined to be turned away from

her scorn.

"There was a time," she asserted contemptuously, "when you were not so densely stupid, and when you could see something in a girl beside her fitness to decorate your kitchen. I suppose she can wash dishes and milk the cow!"

"How did you divine it?" I cried ec-

statically. "Jane, I solemnly affirm to you that if you could see her transforming the cow-shed into a rustic throneroom, with a three-legged stool for a dais and a milk-pan for a-er-a badge of royalty, even your constrained approval would throw open its floodgates!"

"Fudge!" said Jane. "Does she operate a truck-garden?" She almost

purred the query.

I knocked the ashes from the brierroot and studied my boot with absorption. After a moment of silence I

looked up.

"I beg your pardon," I said politely, "did you speak? You see, for the moment I was thinking of her in a pink gingham dress with her crown of black hair nestled against the yellow flank of a sleepy cow. The picture for the moment-only for the moment-rendered me oblivious."

"Oh, it does not matter," Jane assured me. "I said nothing important.

Where is the lady's dairy?'

"Dairy?" I repeated. "Oh, that is a good one. Of course, she has no dairy. She lives much like the rest of us! These things I speak of are merely incidental accomplishments that cropped out in the country where the servants all left. I believe," I explained glibly, "that the Amalgamated Helpers of America went out on a strike!

"Are you amusing yourself at my expense?" asked Jane, with frigidity.

I was somewhat hurt. Possibly my voice betrayed me. "Certainly not," I responded. "Those things appealed to me. I suppose I was stupid to think you could understand my point of view. I did not mean a comparison. You see it is just this way, Jane," I went on, with gathering earnestness. "It is not that Elizabeth—ves. that is the name does not excel in every charm and accomplishment that you other girls have; but just that she has them all and so much more." I felt I was arguing Elizabeth's case rather well. "Now, you are the type preeminent of the finished product. You have pedigree, brains, and an overdose of personal magnetism. Men grow irresponsible and lose their heads with you. I did it once myself." I conceded this with mag-nanimity. "Well, to all those things add the quality of wonderful adaptability, the capacity to be just as charming in a milk-shed as in a ballroom, and you have a crude idea of Elizabeth."

"You abhor comparisons as nature abhors a vacuum, don't you?" suggested Jane, in a honeyed voice.

"I retract," I declared penitently. "A man in love is more than half a

fool, I dare say."

"Make it unanimous. I'm going," declared my companion, rising and sweeping with dignity toward the door of the summer-house.

I reached it first and stood, block-

ing it.

"Jane," I said, "I have been away for a year. I now see you for the first time, and you assured me that you would always be a sister to me. I remember it, because at the time you said it I thought it such a crude piece of cruelty that it branded itself upon the quivering nerves of my memory. I have had no one to whom I could speak my heart about-well, about Elizabethand I counted on you to hear me out." I was pleading with all the appeal my voice would carry. "Stay five minutes, I implore you. I want to hear about your happiness, too."

"As long as you bar the way I suppose I must, unless I make an outcry

for help," replied Jane.

"When are you going to announce your engagement?" I asked.

"I told you I was not engaged," as-

serted Jane.

"Yes, I know. That was for the club-but strictly for home consumption, when will the papers publish it?"

"Why do you insist that they will

publish it at all?"

I raised my hands in a gesture of despair. "Of course," I said, "you have a perfect right to remain silent-or even to prevaricate. It is strictly your business, and his. But I have made you the recipient of my confidence and I hoped that you-well, never mind, I was less in your confidence than I had hoped. That is all!"

Jane sat listening to the whippoor-

"If she is a really nice girl," she said sympathetically, "I am sorry for her."

"Why?" I inquired. "I'm afraid you will make a poor husband." It seemed to hurt her to reach

the conclusion.

"You are wrong," I replied firmly.
"I shall be a model. There is only one condition under which I could be a brute. If I ever married a girl and found that she had taken me on to show some other fellow, whom she really loved, that she did not care for himwhy, then I should dedicate my life to pulling her hair." I spoke with the stern gravity of a judge pronouncing sentence.

"Are you sure that this girl is not doing that?" she put the query tentatively.

Jane!" I cried in horrified protest. "Jane, have you become as cynical as that? Can you conceive of a womana woman of our sort really doing a

thing like that?"

"Perhaps." The word came slowly. Jane sat with one elbow on her knee, her chin on her hand. "Some rather nice girls have done it-until the right men have stopped it."

"Ah, I see!" I assented. Then I added with laudable cheerfulness: "Well, they deserved to have their hair

pulled forever and a day.'

Jane was silent for the space of several whippoorwill cries. Then she said half to herself, her chin still in her hand: "I wonder if many men hold your views-about the hair-pulling?"

"Can't say," I answered, refilling my pipe. Old pipes are much the best. "Probably not. So few people have correct views. By the way," I added, "tell me about the era of Fitz Hughes. When did he appear upon your horizon and attach himself as a satellite, and when did he become a fixed star?"

"Some time ago." She spoke with-

out great animation.

"When did you become engaged?" Repetition is an effective weapon. Constant drips will eat through adamant. She did not enter a denial this time. "We are just semi-engaged," she re-

"Ah, and when are you going to be

semi-married?" I continued.

"I don't know." She spoke reflectively. "I think if I were a man and were in love with me, I'd marry me and not be engaged at all. My engagements usually degenerate into mere episodes."

"Yes," I mused. "I remember when I was engaged to you myself. It turned out like that. Still I suppose these things work out for the best.

"I am sure of it," she declared, with

conviction.

"It was just such a night as this," I reminisced, "when you accepted me. seem to remember that I kissed you. You wore a soft, misty sort of a pinky gown-much the same sort you are wearing now."

"You have an inconvenient memory,"

she said coolly.

"I suppose he kissed you, too?" I inquired politely.

"That is an impertinent question!" "I withdraw it," I hastened to de-

"I should not have let you," she said thoughtfully. "Will you please forget

"Never!" I cried. "It was not the least your fault. You could not help

it, you know."

She rose indignantly. "Do you suppose for one fraction of a second," she demanded, "that you could ever have kissed me if I had not-had not let you?"

I rose, too, and as we stood there I saw tears of indignation. Then I asked audaciously: "Jane, will you kiss me good-by now? I don't think Elizabeth

would object."

"I most certainly will not. I will not ever talk to you!" She turned quickly to go and I caught her in my arms. Emergencies call for prompt and heroic remedies. "Then I will test that proposition—of your letting me," I declared.

I tested it.

"Jane, do you like Elizabeth?" I asked a few moments later.

She had for the moment forgotten about Elizabeth. So had I. Now she drew back so suddenly that she eluded my grasp and I found it necessary to seize one hand to prevent her escape.

"I hate her, but most of all, I hate

you!" she said tempestuously.

Then anger choked her utterance.

"I am so sorry," I averred mournfully. She clapped both hands to her ears and I had to draw them away, as gently as I could. "I am so sorry," I persisted, "I did so want you to like Elizabeth. I had so much trouble inventing her. I had to spend every night over on deck, under the stars, smoking up Elizabeth. She cost me one hundred and twenty cigars—getting her just right—and now you don't like her."

Jane laid one hand on each of my shoulders. "You idiot!" she condescended to explain. "Elizabeth was such a palpable fake, I couldn't possibly approve of her!"

"Personally, dear." I declared, with

fervor, "I detest black hair. And sapphire eyes are the only sort worth loving."

She drew back at arm's length. "Oh, I forgot, I am just a jumble of hothouses and things." she accused.

houses and things," she accused.

"Those details all go along with Elizabeth," I avowed. "Henceforth, I am done with fiction. I love you and I cannot tell a lie, or to be exact, I can't stick to it."

"Jane, oh, Jane!" came a masculine voice from somewhere in the distance.

"Your ex-near-betrothed is calling you," I commented, for she did not seem to hear.

"And we should throw plates and things at each other," she continued, with a lurking smile just touching the corners of her lips.

"I would rather," I asseverated stoutly, as I overcame the disadvantage of an arm's-length quarantine, "have you throw plates at me than that any one else should throw kisses."

A LOVE-SONG

S PEAK not to me of parting here. I will not have it so.
One of us may in some dread year,
Some year of chill and snow,
Pass on. But part? By all above
That we shall never do;
For you are all myself, my Love,
And I am one with you.

You may be called to some far spot,
On some blest errand bent,
And leave me here to moan my lot
In grievous discontent.
But parted? Never! Dire defeat
Dogs those who'd make us two;
For you are all myself, my Sweet,
And I am one with you.

My spirit intertwines with yours,
And yours is woof of mine,
And long as Love itself endures
'Twill find therein a shrine.
No earthly chance can tear apart
Or sever tie so true,
Whilst you are all myself, my Heart,
And I am one with you.

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.





HE other day, when I was sitting in my room, attending to some much neglected correspondence, I heard an altercation at the front door. They were the voices of my son Immie and

his Aunt Maria I heard Maria say: "It's mine, Janmie; I bought it and

I intend to keep it."

And Jinmie said: "I don't see why irs more yours than mine-I bid fifty cents and you bid fifty cents. I thought he knocked it down to me."
"I paid it," Maria replied, with de-

cision.

"Oh, I'll give you your old fifty

cents," said Jimmie.

"I do not think," Maria announced, in that calm, judicial tone which is peculiarly irritating to the nerves, "that you are addressing your aunt in a suitable way. You seem to forget that I am many years older than you, Jimmie."

"You bet I don't!" Jimmie exclaimed. "That will do, Jimmie!" Maria an-nunced crisply. "If you do not forget nounced crisply. that, you forget yourself. We'll talk no more about it. I bought the oil-can, and it's mine; and what you would want with an oil-can of that size, I don't for a moment see."

I thought it was about time for some one to interfere, for I saw that in a few minutes Jimmie was going to be impertinent, and I should have to punish him, so I strolled out of my room as if by chance, and asked, with assumed

nonchalance:

"What are all these things?"

Well might I ask. For in front of my door, piled high on a wheelbarrow. was the most miscellaneous lot of old junk that I had ever clapped my eyes on. Behind the wheelbarrow, on the piazza, some pieces of furniture were heaped. The negro who had brought the things there was standing, waiting to be paid, and as he heard my words

he grinned broadly.

I knew exactly what had happened. My sister Maria had been to an auction again. Every little while Maria, as my husband says, "breaks loose," and goes to an auction. Auctions seem to have the effect upon her that drink has upon some people. Usually Maria is a reasonable woman, living a well-ordered life, like hundreds of other middle-aged, unmarried women throughout the land; but there seems to be something about an auction that completely upsets her sense of values. If she sees something going cheap she can't help buying it, no matter how useless it is; and the funny part of it is, she is as proud as Punch of her purchases.

When I asked: "What are all these things?" Jimmie said, in tones of deep

scorn:

"Aunt Maria's been lootin' Pekin!"

Maria pretended not to hear Jimmie. "There was a perfectly wonderful auction over on Lincoln Street," she raid. "You know those old sisters that lived there so many years? They literally never threw away a thing-

"Yes," said my fifteen-year-old daughter, Edith, coming out of the library, and casting a supercilious eye over Maria's plunder, "and Aunt Maria's gone and bought all the things that they ought to have thrown away

long ago!"

Maria again paid no attention to the irreverent remarks of the vounger generation, but swam along enthusiastic-

"So I thought I'd just drop in and see what there was, and I got some perfectly splendid stone china-the old kind of unbreakable ware-for the kitchen."

"That was very kind of you, Maria,"

"Beside, I got a whole lot of pictures -only thirty-five cents for the lot!" she

went on triumphantly.

The pictures represented lachrymose ladies leaning over graves, "Baby's First Step," "The Courting," "The Stag at Bay," "Moonlight on Lake Geneva," "A Harem Scene," "Cherries Are Ripe," besides a number of "fruit

pieces" in color.

"Of course," Maria said, "I know the pictures are old-fashioned; but frames are so expensive, and I thought we could take the pictures out and give them to some hospital, and then I could easily clean and varnish the frames, and we could frame anything we wanted to. I have a great number of unmounted photographs of the English cathedrals that I have been meaning to do something with for a long time.

Every inch of wall space in Maria's room is already filled, so Edith asked

suspiciously:

"Where are you going to hang the English cathedrals?"

"Well," said Maria, "the hall looks bare to me; and besides that, you've hardly anything in your own room, you know, and-

Edith has read a great many things about art, and has gone in heavily for simplicity, so she now said, with a decision almost equal to Maria's:

"You needn't think, Aunt Maria, that you will palm off your old English cathedrals on me! I think pictures of buildings are very incongruous on walls, anyway, and I wouldn't have those old frames in my room for anything."

"I don't think you're very gracious

about your aunt's offer," I reproved my daughter.

"Well, mother," said Edith, "you know how Annt Maria is. If I didn't take an ax those cathedrals-

"That will do!" said I.

Here Maria caught sight of Jimmie vanishing, lugging something heavy. "Jimmie!" she cried. "What are you

doing with that oil-can?"

Jimmie stuck his head around the corner of the house.

"It's m'own oil-can!" he grumbled. "I was taking it away with me."

"Editha," announced Maria, "I appeal to you! I bought that oil-can and paid for it out of my own money. Jimmie, for reasons unknown to me, wants an oil-can—though what good a five-gallon oil-can is to a twelve-yearold boy I don't see. I bought it for the house-I heard you say that you needed a new oil-can-and this one was a most wonderful bargain; it was only fifty cents."

"What else did you buy, Maria?" I asked, anxious to bridge over the difficulty as Jimmie set down the oil-can

with a clatter.

"I got this handsome cuckoo clock," Maria replied. "I've always wanted a cuckoo clock. I think it would be very nice to hang up in the hall. It doesn't cuckoo now every time it ought to, but that can soon be fixed. Besides that, I got," she went on, her voice rising exultantly, "a bread-board. I know, Editha, that you'll say we have a breadboard, but it's no harm to have two," she went on hastily. "And-and I bought a cabinet, too," continued Maria. "It's a very unique piece of furniture."

It was indeed. It was a thing that resembled some white obelisk, and looked like no piece of furniture seen on land or sea. It had a number of little sets of shelves, each smaller than the last, and tapering up to a point.

"I thought," said Maria, "of giving it to Jimmie, so that he could make a collection of minerals, but he has been so disagreeable about the oil-can that I shall have it put in my own room, and make an archaic cabinet of it. I

have a lot of things that I have collected that I have not had a place for

hitherto."

Poor Maria! I pitied her; for I knew well enough that she didn't want that funereal cabinet placed in her cozy room, but having bought it, she felt that she had to stand by it.

The negro had gone, but as we stood there talking he wheeled again into the yard. Piled high upon his wheelbar-

row were some bulky articles. "What are those?" I asked.

"Those," Maria said, "are two chicken-coops and a dog-kennel. They were very cheap, Editha; it seemed a shame to let them go by. I thought we might need chicken-coops some day. And the kennel will be good for Piker."

Now, Maria knows perfectly well that Piker, our dog, sleeps in the house; she might as well have suggested a kennel for one of the children as for that

spoiled animal.

"I thought," Maria went on aggressively, "I'd get the kennel, anyway. And then, if Piker doesn't want it, perhaps Agnes will like it for a playhouse when she comes to visit. I think I made a pretty good haul, don't you?"

I could not but confess she had. A five-gallon oil-can, odd pieces of china, a bread-board, a broken cuckoo clock, two chicken-coops, that strange cabinet, and a dog-kennel, seemed to me a fine afternoon's work, and I said so.

Here Seraphy appeared.

"Th' egg man's here," she said, "an' says d'you want some broilers next week——" Her eye lit upon the contents of the wheelbarrow.

"I've bought you some things for your kitchen, Seraphy," Maria told her

genially.

Seraphy's practised eye ran over the stone china, the bread-board, the old chopper and the various kitchen fixings that Maria had acquired.

"What's them for, Miss Maria?" she

asked grimly.

"They are to use, Seraphy," replied

Maria.

"It's glad I am to see'm," said Seraphy. "Now Jimmie can't be takin' my regular dishes f'r feedin' his animals in. He can have 'em—th' whole lot of' em—for chicken-feed or f'r keepin' pollywogs in, or what not."

Maria at this looked crestfallen. She said nothing. I knew her feelings were

wounded.

"It's very kind indeed of you, Maria," I said, "to think of us all—and especially that oil-can. We needed a

new oil-can."

"Yes!" Seraphy grumbled. "It was a new one we needed. If this keeps on, next time Miss Maria goes to an auction she'd better buy a new cupboard or some shelves—it's so crowded now on my shelves there's no place to lay

down th' tooth-pick.'

I retired to my own room, thinking how happy I could be in the world if I were left undisturbed to my own devices, because here was the house all upset, everybody in it by the ears; besides that, I was worried at the growing antagonism between Jimmie and his aunt. I do so like harmony in the family, and it seemed to me as if Jimmie and Maria could never meet without sparks flying. I felt how sad it was that limmie couldn't care more for his aunt, on the one hand, and that she couldn't understand the needs of a boy of his age more, on the other. I knew, of course, that Jimmie was now sulking because of the oil-can, which he had wanted for some obscure purpose. felt sorry for him, for after all an oilcan doesn't seem to be a lethal toy, and he evidently wanted it very much: and as Seraphy had suggested, it was a new oil-can that we needed, instead of the bulky one provided by Maria's kindness.

That evening we all went to a lecture upon: "Has Science Proved the Reality of the Unseen?" Maria is far from being a Spiritualist, but I sometimes think she might have been one in another environment, so great a fascination have all occult topics for her. We talked a moment with the lecturer afterward, and he told Maria that she was "psychic." She talked at length about it on the way home.

"Tve always suspected," she said, "that I've had peculiar gifts in this di-

rection, though I don't think it's best to dabble with them. Often when I wake up in the night I think I hear music——"

To which my daughter Edith replied: "I think that lecturer was a

fool!"

"Of course you do, Edith, at your materialistic age," her aunt replied crushingly. "One has to live a while in this world to realize that 'there are more things in heaven and earth.' There are so many unknown elements in the world," Maria continued, "that I do not see why we should not readily believe that circumstances may arise to render the normally invisible visible to our eyes. Now, I have always felt that the simple-minded people, who have no so-called 'scientific ideas' to stand in their way, see more than we do. As the man said to-night, it's not for nothing that all savage tribes show such a unanimity in their belief in the Unseen. And take dogs-why, dogs, Editha, make me fairly creep sometimes. I've seen Piker act time and again as if he saw things I couldn't. The way that dog will sit for an hour looking at things in a corner, moaning and his hair bristling, fairly makes the gooseflesh come, I say.

Indeed, this is one of the most disagreeable traits of our dog Piker. He is always stalking around imagining he sees things, and growling at them.

We had got into our house by that time, and Piker greeted us with his usual demonstrations. Then he ran upstairs and stood in front of Maria's door, looking in and whining.

"Look at him now!" Maria ex-

claimed.

In the light of what we had been hearing, Piker's actions were very peculiar. Maria's room is at the head of the stairs, and Piker looked in through the door, whined and bristled and whined again, and growled softly, as if indeed he saw something.

"Pooh!" said Edith, "It's a Junebug he sees. He always acts that way

over June-bugs.'

"That's not the way he acts over June-bugs!" Maria contradicted. "He

paws over June-bugs. I'm going up to see what it is."

She went to the top of the stairs, looked in her room, gave a shriek, and tottered back and sat down on the stair.

"Why, what is it, Maria?" I cried.

"It's Something—Something in my room," replied Maria, "Something strange and nebulous, and as I came in it moved—moved!"

"Aunt Maria," muttered Edith, "is daffy with the heat! That's what comes

of bughouse lectures!"

I went up-stairs and pushed my way past Maria, Edith following me. From the velvet blackness of Maria's room, sure enough, there shone out a strange, tall, white object.

Edith walked in, scratched a match, and burst into heartless laughter.

"It's your cabinet, Aunt Maria!" she said.

Jimmie also laughed uproariously, Maria gathered herself up from the

stairs. "I see no cause for so much giggling; anybody would have felt the same as I did," she said, with dignity. "But there's one thing certain—I can't sleep with that cabinet in my room. I might wake up in the night and see it there and not know what it was, and there are nervous shocks enough in the world for a sensitive person, without having unnecessary ones."

So Jimmie and Seraphy had to get to work and move the heavy thing out. When Jimmie saw it his eye lit up.

"Say, Aunt Maria, let me buy that off'n you?" he asked. Something about the horrid thing appealed to him.

"You can have it." his aunt replied

generously.

Inwardly I groaned, because I saw that bulky, disagreeable piece of furniture fixed on us for all eternity.

In my sleep that night I had strange dreams, dreams that forced themselves into a reality. Presently I found myself wide-awake, listening to a persistent cry. It came:

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

Henry heard me stir, and said: "What's that infernal noise?"

"I suppose," I said, "it must be Ma-

ria's cuckoo clock."

I slipped out of bed and into my dressing-gown and slippers, and lighting a candle, went down-stairs. In the hall I met Maria.

"You heard it, too?" she inquired. "I should say I did!" I replied rather

"It's been going on a long time,"

said Maria.

All the way down-stairs the horrid clock kept on clamoring: "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" It was hanging up where Maria had put it, and in the dim light of the candle we could see the little bird clapping its wings and crying out: "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

"It has cuckooed fifty-four times already," said Maria. "I couldn't help counting. I happened to be awake in the night, and heard it when it began.'

We tried to stop it, but it wouldn't From over the banisters came Edith's peevish voice.

"Can't you stop that miserable clock?

It's waked me up!"

At this Piker, a dog who can sleep through burglars, became aware that something was stirring in the house, and began barking. Henry told him to shut up, and then came thumping down the stairs. By the light of the candle we all three watched the cuckoo clock. The bird kept on: "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

"It's cuckooed eighty-four times

now," said Maria.

Piker, feeling very officious, jumped up at the wall, trying to catch the bird. and barked.

"Lie down, you fool!" said Henry

crossly.

We did our best to stop the thing, but it still continued: "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" while Maria counted mechanically:

"One hundred and two, one hundred

and three-

"I know what's happened," she said. "It's an eight-day clock, and it's cuckooing for all the last eight days it hasn't said anything. It's cuckooing them all at once."

At this Henry had a gesture of de-

spair.

"Good heavens!" was all he could

Maria is quick at arithmetic.

"That will mean that it will be over 1200 times if it does them all."

She kept on counting: "One hundred and ninety-six, one hundred and ninety-seven-"

"See here, Maria, this is too much!" said Henry. "We've got to sleep. That thing will keep on for hours more."

"Cuckoo!" said the bird, derisively flapping his wings.

Edith's voice came from over the banisters.

"Is it never going to stop?"

"Cuckoo, cuckoo!" the bird went on in answer.

"Maria," said Henry, "did I understand that you gave this clock to the house?"

"Yes," Maria said faintly.

"Well, Maria," Henry went on, "since it's ours, will you forgive me if I take matters into my own hands and use drastic measures?'

"Oh, do anything you want to!" Maria wailed. "Only stop that awful

noise!"

"Cuckoo, cuckoo!" the bird continued

Henry got on a chair and took down the clock, the creature cuckooing in his face as he did so. Then there was the noise of breaking wood. The cuckoo was dead. Maria breathed a sigh of relief.

"I'm sorry to do this, Maria," said Henry, "but a clock that's capable of cuckooing over twelve hundred times in the middle of the night has got to have something done to it. And by the way," he went on, "there's a terrible smell of kerosene around. I wonder what it can be?"

This smell had indeed been forcing itself upon my consciousness, but I had been so occupied with the cuckoo clock that I hadn't stopped to notice.

"It seems," said Maria, "to come

from the dining-room."

Together we three explored. In the dining-room the smell of kerosene increased, and from thence on to the kitchen. The doors are left open at night through our house, so that the kitchen fire may take off the morning chill. We opened the door of the back kitchen, whence the smell seemed to come, and Piker skipped gaily on His foot semed to patter in ahead. something damp as he did so. An overwhelming smell of kerosene came to our nostrils.

Henry stepped into the room and

"Why, this floor is wet!"

Then he retreated into the kitchen. The flicker of the candle disclosed in the back kitchen a wide-spread, oozy

puddle. It was the five gallons of kerosene, which had leaked out in the night.

Piker, not liking the smell, now pattered back into the house, tracking the kerosene with his wet paws as he did so. At this point, Henry took off his kerosene-soaked bath-slippers and flung them into the coal-scuttle; and at this Maria collapsed into a chair; her fat face puckered up like a baby's, her chin quivered, and large tears ran down her face

"Oh!" she wailed. "Think what I've brought you to, Editha! I'm nothing but a useless fifth wheel to the cart-I'm no good to any one in life. Whenever I try to do any little thing for this family it always comes out wrongeverything's ruined in there! Heaven knows how the thing's going to be cleaned out!" she sobbed.

"Come, come, Maria." I said, "don't take it to heart. You didn't know. You just tried to do a kindness-"

"Don't talk to me, Editha," she sobbed, "don't talk to me! I've long known the children had no respect for me; but the worst of it is, I know I don't deserve it! I'd better gather my poor little belongings together and go to live in a little place somewhere by myself.

I comforted Maria as best I could, and while I felt sorry for her grief, there vet arose in me an uncharitable feeling of anger that Maria should go wailing around.

Drearily we all went back to our rooms, Henry silent, as he is when he has been pretty well wrought up. Next morning, Maria didn't come down to breakfast, and finally I took it up to her on a tray. I found her quite haggard. The night had brought no peace

The whole household was upset. The only person who saw a silver lining to it was Jimmie, who merely remarked:

'Now p'r'aps Aunt Maria'll let me

have the oil-can!"

When he came home from school in the afternoon the first thing he asked for was this coveted object. For some reason, it seemed a priceless treasure to Jimmie.

"It's probably out on the ash-heap," I told him. "Seraphy carried it out

there."

He went out and searched for it, and

came in storming.

"Yes," said Maria, "I told the man to take it away. I didn't want the horrid thing around, after all the trouble it's caused."

By this time she was more cheerful. Somehow, she had shifted the responsibility of the affair to the can itself.

"Gone!" cried Jimmie. "My can

gone!"

"I didn't want it around," Maria re-

peated obstinately.

"I wanted to try a scientific experiment with that can. A feller never can do anything but women interfere with him!" Iimmie stormed.

Maria was in a softer mood than

usual.

"Immie," she said, "I didn't realize that you really wanted the can. I'll give you the two hen-coops and the

dog-house."

This mollified Jimmie. These articles appealed to him; but it struck dismay to my soul. I am not a woman who likes to accumulate useless articles about her, and I had thought that perhaps, after this catastrophe, I could unostentatiously get rid of the hen-coops and kennel; but now I knew I couldn't. For there are so many things in the world that Jimmie can't have and can't do that those that he can do I never interfere with.

All that afternoon Jimmie was very busy about something in the garden, hammering and sawing. He seemed to be taking the hen-coops apart. I was resting in my room, after having got a cleaning woman to do what she could toward mopping up the kerosene, smoothed down Seraphy, and kept up Maria's spirits. Suddenly my attention was called by a cry from Maria.

"For Heaven's sake, Editha," she cried, "come and see what's this!"

I looked out of the window, and down by the big apple-tree I saw the kennel, swinging in mid-air. It was slowly ascending into the big appletree. Jimmie himself was up in the tree, directing operations, while little boys pulled at a block and tackle. At the same moment I heard Seraphy's shrill voice crying:

"Ye limbs of Satan! Give me me new clothes-line!" She called up to my window: "Tis me good new clothesline they've got strung aroun' that dogkennel! An' whatever they're doin'

with it in th' tree, I dunno!'

With weary footsteps I went down to the garden to see what was doing. I arrived there just in time to see Jimmie and another boy, standing perilously among the branches, grasp the dogkennel as it came up and place it on a platform that they had hammered on the limbs of the tree. The foundations of the platform tipped slightly, and the limbs bent and swayed under the weight of the dog-kennel; but the boys looked upon their handiwork with joy. "What is this?" I cried to Jimmie.

"Father said I could!" he called back belligerently. "I asked him myself at dinner to-day, and he said I might! It's our club-house. You know my book, that tells boys how to do things? Well, it tells you how to build a club-house forty feet above the ground—this ain't

forty feet."

"No, thank God!" I groaned.

It seemed to me that day that I just couldn't bear having that dog-kennel staring me in the face up in the appletree; and it seemed so to Maria, too. She spent the evening groaning about what she had brought us all to, and prophesying darkly that the boys would break their necks—or anyway, their

arms and legs; which I thought only

too likely.

In the days that followed Maria was very subdued. She said nothing about the boys whooping around the place; for the whole gang that Jimmie belongs to now circled around our appletree, although only two of them at a time could get into the club-house. She made no suggestions about bringing up the children; in fact, her whole manner changed. From time to time she talked about what a burden she was to me.

It was shortly after this that the Bakers held an auction of such of their household goods as they were not going to take with them when they moved, and at the end of the auction Maria appeared before me her old cheerful

self.

"Editha," she said, "I feel that I owe you something for all the trouble I've caused you. I went to the Bakers' auction—I didn't buy a thing, not a thing, although I saw several objects that I would have liked to have; but not knowing how they would turn out once I got them home, I refrained. The only thing I did get was an oil-can. I felt at least I owed you that. It's a perfectly good oil-can—very much like the—the other. I had to pay more for it, of course—I suppose because it is a good can."

"Thank you, Maria," I said, "you're

very thoughtful."

We kissed each other, and I felt that the Dove of Peace had again descended upon us. Scraphy alone eyed the oilcan with suspicion.

"It looks th' broth an' b'ilin' of th'

other!" she muttered.

"Well," Maria exclaimed tartly, "I don't suppose that other oil-can was the only one there was of that make. They're old-fashioned in some ways, but made of sterling material."

That same evening we were all sitting around the evening lamp when

Seraphy came to us.

"I wish ye'd come out, Mis' Preston,

an' look at th' back kitchen.'

Her request was a command. I followed meekly, as did Maria, who scented trouble. Jimmie also followed.

The oil-can sat in its accustomed All around it an oily liquid made a dark ring.

"Miss Maria seems to have a likin' f'r leaky cans," said Seraphy sourly.

"Why!" cried Jimmie joyously. "That's my oil-can-the one that Aunt Maria took away from me, an' then gave away on me!"

Maria looked at the dark ring of oil that was creeping slowly across the back kitchen floor. Her face fell; but at Jimmie's cry she rallied a little.

"Nonsense, Jimmie!" she said. "That's not the same oil-can! It may leak, but it's not the same can."

Iimmie went over and looked at it carefully.

"Yes, 'tis, too," he said. "I know it 'cause of this thing that's scratched on it. It's the same old can-it's my can."

"But how--" gasped Maria. "How I sent a man for it that morn-

"Never a man then came, ma'am," said Seraphy. "In th' mornin' it was settin' out on th' ash-heap, an' I saw them Baker children foolin' around an' I saw th' oil-can, plain's I see it now; an' next I looks out, th' can's gone an' Baker children gone, an' I didn't think nothin' more of it.

"Oh!" cried Maria. "What an imposition! What a woman that Mrs. Baker must be, to sit there and let me buy back a can that her children sneaked off our own ash-heap!"

But here Seraphy burst into cackles of mirth. My old cook laughs but rarely, and it is a fearsome sound when she does. She cackled and cackled away like a hen that has just laid an egg. She cackled as if she would never stop. Tears of mirth ran down her gaunt, withered cheeks.

"It's one on you, Miss Maria!" she gasped. "It's one on you!"

Maria looked at the oil-can as if she gladly would have annihilated it.

"When I think that, all told, I have paid one dollar and twenty-five cents for that miserable thing—when I think that I bought it over again-it's enough to shake my faith in an overruling Providence!" she said, and left the

kitchen.

When I went to bed that night Maria called me into her room, and I will say that I pitied her. She wasn't teary this time; but the only way I can describe her is to say that the starch was taken out of her.

"Editha," she said, "I'm just about to go away and visit for a week. I don't feel that I can face the jeers that I know will be mine from your chil-

dren."

"They won't jeer at you, Maria," I

soothed her.

"Even if you keep them from openly expressing what they feel," answered poor Maria, "I shall know what they're

thinking. I can't bear it."

Here Jimmie sneaked into the room. Something about his aunt's dejection, and the way she had taken the oil-can the second time, touched a chord in his perverse soul. He, too, did things that went wrong. He, too, was blamed and laughed at for being helpful. For the first time in his life, perhaps, his Aunt Maria's emotions were comprehensible to him. For once she was the one in the wrong, the under dog, the way he so frequently was, and he pitied her.

"Aw, come off, Aunt Maria." he said awkwardly. "Nobody's goin' to josh you about this. Aw, don't go away, Aunt Maria." He searched around in his mind for some inducement to stay, and a luminous idea came to him. "You stay, Aunt Maria," he exclaimed, his face alight with a happy thought, "you stay, an' I'll put a ladder up to my club-house an' boost you up into it, if you want to!"

Maria looked at Jimmie gratefully. For a second of time the gulf which separates a stout, middle-aged maiden lady and a little boy of twelve was bridged. She understood all that this offer meant. With unmistakable gratitude in her face, she said:

"Jimmie, you're a nice little boy, and

I sha'n't forget it.'

And thus, by means of the oil-can, the feud that has for so long existed between my little boy and his aunt has been bridged over—temporarily.



Theatrical Broadway in the torrid season. Playgoing in hot weather too uncomfortable. One great midsummer success, however, is "The Three Twins." Bessie McCoy scores a ten-strike in the "Yama Yama" song. The coming season will have more musical plays of a pretentious nature than ever before. Many new plays of native manufacture. Foreign artists to visit our shores next season. Dramas with a Western atmosphere likely to be at a discount



HEN midsummer is reached and New York's hundred and fifty square miles of brick, stone and asphalt are sizzling with heat all day and all night, metropolitan theatricals are neces-

sarily at the extreme ebb. Managers may expose large blocks of ice in the lobbies of their playhouses, they may engage small boys to distribute palmleaf fans, they may equip their auditoriums with electrical apparatus for churning the air, and they may advertise that their theaters are the coolest places in town, but business drops to a lamentable figure and the majority of sophisticated citizens betake themselves to the roof-gardens or the seashore. They know that playgoing in hot weather is too uncomfortable to be entertaining, and the man whose business it is to write of plays and players realizes that now is the time to get a vacation if he is ever to have one.

Broadway during this torrid season the part of Broadway which has come to be known variously as "The Great

White Way," "Theater Alley" and "The Hamlet's Haven"-is clogged, on the shady side, by actors and actresses of many degrees and all ages, and the sweltering managers' offices in all the adjacent buildings are packed from early morning, when the office-boys "open up," until the fag-end of the afternoon, when the plutocratic heads of the establishments ride away in their big motor-cars to dine with their own or somebody else's wives at Rector's, the Knickerbocker or Sherry's-packed with perspiring people looking for engagements. Few plays-none of a serious nature-are produced during this iced-drink period, and nine-tenths of the darkened theaters are given up to spiders and those other members of the lower animal kingdom who have their innings only when men and women are too tired or too hot to work.

New York has been perspiring freely for two months and is still unable to bear even the thought of a fur coat. Once or twice rumors have reached the heart of Theaterland that somebody or other was about to have some sort of a play tried out by some Harlem or Bronx or Brooklyn stock company, but in no

instance has anything further been heard of the venture, and only once in the last month has a manager tempted fate in a first-class theater and succeeded.

This single exception to the midsummer rule is "The Three Twins," now being presented at the Herald Square Theater, recently vacated by Mr. Lew Fields and "The Girl Behind the Counter." Mr. Joseph M. Gaites, a more or less unknown figure in leading theatrical circles, appears on the playbill as the producer of the piece. and Charles Dickson, O. A. Hauerbach and Carl Hoschna respectively take credit for the book, lyrics and music, with apologies to Mrs. Pacheco, whose farce "Incog" offered the material from which "The Three Twins" was made.

Excepting three members of the company and the things they do, there is nothing remarkable about the new piece. A lot of pretty girls in bathing costumes-in the summer-time, you know, a portion of the chorus must always appear in abbreviated seaside attire-and a semicircle of statuesque young women, clad in Sixth Avenue conceptions of the "sheath" variety of the long-famous directoire gown, contribute the expected air of sameness without which no musical comedy would be quite recognizable. there are "summer girls" and "boating girls" and "tennis boys" and "picnic girls" who try as hard as they can to give to sweltering Herald Square the smack of the breeze-swept vacation resorts where luckier folk are drinking buttermilk, eating home-made pies, and fattening up for the autumn.

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The three hills in the ensemble of platitudinous sameness are Miss Bessie McCoy, Mr. Clifton Crawford, and Miss Frances Kennedy. Miss Kennedy is absolutely unknown to Broadway and has not a rôle calculated to make her or any successor she may ever have in it famous, but she gets the maximum effect out of it and for doing so deserves more than the usual perfunctory credit. For two long acts she is forced to sob whenever on the stage—to sob and still evidence signs of girlish at-

tractiveness. If she were in the picture only occasionally this might not be so difficult, but she is not. She is a pivotal point in the plot and is in sight as much as any one else. The fact that she graduated directly from the chorus to this really important part and plays it with singular success stamps her as a notable and valuable recruit to the ranks of acceptable players.

Miss Bessie McCoy, although still a very young woman, has been known to playgoers of America, London, and Australia for a considerable number of years, first as a member of the celebrated team of girl dancers, the Mc-Coy Sisters, and later as the soubrette of the New York Hippodrome, where on the largest theater-stage in the world she succeeded magnificently in as difficult a dancing part as ever fell to the lot of any one. Her chief success in "The Three Twins" comes from her delightful presentation of an interpolated number in the last act-"Yama Yama Man." Throughout the piece her work is uniformly pleasing, finished and artistic, and as she plays a principal part in the story besides contributing the greater portion of the Terpsichorean exhibit the young woman with the sinuous figure, the blonde tresses, and the poetic toes, is kept busy. But the "Yama" song is her ten-strike. It has made her overnight the most talkedabout musical-comedy artiste in New York, and it has lifted the play from the ranks of indifferent successes to the higher realm of unqualified "hits."

"Yama Yama Man" can be described best as an eccentric dancing number. It has nothing whatever to do with "The Three Twins" or with anything else under the sun. The costumes worn by Miss McCoy's ten girl assistants are indicative of nothing to be found outside Hobgoblin Land, the lyrics of the innumerable verses are utterly crazy, and the music itself is hardly whistleable. And yet the whole thing is a tremendous hit. It comes almost at the end of the play-just before the finale-and even on the hot nights of which I have been speaking it has been "encored" so many times that the graceful dancer

and her outlandishly garbed assistants have sometimes fainted from exhaus-

It may be impossible to set down in black and white the reason for the success of this dancing song other than to say that it is pretty, artistic and tuneful. To say that, however, and to risk no other guess would be dodging the question, for the extraordinary character of the number and the size of its effect on the pocketbooks of the public make guessing interesting and almost worth while

If two-score musical comedies were not produced every year there would be no need of this "Yama" song, for the very good reason that there would be no surfeit of musical-comedy sameness. If most of the countries of the earth did not look alike Holland and Japan would not appear so picturesque. If real icecream grew on every tree, and homemade plum-pudding could be bought of the greengrocer, and mince-pies-good ones-could be ordered by telephone there would not be quite so much need for thousands of us to go to the old home on Thanksgiving Day. And if steam-yachts were as cheap as rowboats where would be the fun in vachting?

Miss McCoy's song, I think, has rung the Broadway bull's-eve because it is different. Judged by any regular standard it is in no way remarkable, and yet it has scored a bigger hit than has any other musical-comedy number of the past year. Of course the young lady's excellent dancing helps to make it "go," but I think any student of "steps" will admit that she dances at least as well in "Boo-hoo Tee-hee" and in "The Hypnotic Kiss" earlier in the piece, and yet neither of those specialties gets anything like "Yama's" reception. It does not succeed because of any one point of excellence, but because the whole thing is different, unexpected, uncalled-for, and unusual.

If the sun should suddenly rise on Broadway at eleven o'clock some night all New York would be talking about Old Sol for days to come. Now he is seldom mentioned. If you would have an ordinary musical comedy succeed monumentally insert some big note of novelty in it. That is what Mr. Gaites or somebody else has done in "The Three Twins." For lack of positive knowledge I shall give the credit to Miss McCoy, for she is the artiste who

does the stunt.

Clifton Crawford, the "featured" player in the piece, is best known as a vaudeville singer and narrator of stories, and as the author of "Nancy Brown" in which Miss Marie Cahill flew to the stellar tree-tops several years ago. In the play at the Herald Square he does the same things which he has been doing in the variety theaters—"Balaklava," "Gunga Din," the sneezing story, and several other bits which have made him popular for years -but his recital of Kipling's tale of the regimental water-carrier invariably makes him solidest with the audience · and brings out a round of honest applause which must please Mr. Crawford, and would be pleasing to the ears of the poet and the old Indian if they could once get near enough to hear.

And while we are speaking of musical comedies it may interest you to know that the season about to commence is to bring with it more musical plays of a pretentious nature than have ever been produced in this country in a single season. Every composer of note and every lyricist and librettist of sufficient worth to make his work marketable is busy on new pieces. Fritzi Scheff, Elsie Janis, Hattie Williams, De Wolf Hopper, Frank Daniels, Eddie Foy, Joseph Cawthorne, Joseph Weber, and dainty little Marguerite Clark are all to have brand-new plays, and dozens of others in which there will be no star are being built and rehearsed for early production. Of course there is to be the usual number of plays, but this is the summer-time when serious dramatic works are quite out of fashion.

Victor Herbert is writing five new comedies-an extraordinary musical number for one composer to turn out in a single summer. One of them, "Little Nemo in Slumberland," is to be a gigantic extravaganza built on ideas first presented in Mr. Winsor McKay's remarkable series of comic drawings in the New York Herald. This piece will be produced under the joint management of Frederic Thompson and the Messrs. Klaw and Erlanger, Mr. Thompson assuming the responsibility of staging and arranging the elaborate scenic equipment which is to be a chief feature of the production. The costumes for the ballet have been devised in Paris, and the building of the scenery began as long ago as June, although the piece will not be presented before the public until summer is over and the metropolis is again teeming with the business of a rejuvenated populace.

While it is impossible to read the future with precision it is safe to say that when the theatrical season of 1908-9 finally opens at least two-thirds of the leading playhouses of New York will have as their initial attractions musical comedies or light plays of a musical nature. This statement is made as a sort of clincher to the argument put forward two months ago by your First Nighter. Musical comedy is not a played-out form of entertainment. On the contrary, it has come to stay.

By the time these lines meet your eye, gentle reader, all the Gwendolyns, Clarabels, Jeannettes, Harriettes, Blanches, Trixies, and Totties will be back on Broadway showing fresh coats of tan and ready for rehearsals, and by that time more than one hundred theatrical companies will be going over their lines and studying "business" under the direction of five score irascible stage managers. This is Theaterland's busy time. Here is when the man in the corner drug-store does a rushing trade in "make-up" boxes and coldcream. Hope runs high and nationwide reputations are in the making. Many a little chorus girl who, while you are reading these lines inspired by an insistent editor and an electric fan, is getting ready to make her initial how to an expectant audience will, before the season ends, have started up the road to fame. Many a young man will have commenced a career which he believes will some time overshadow the memory of every stage light 'twixt Betterton and Chauncey Olcott, and many an ingenuous girl graduate will have essayed the heights now held by Nazimova, Duse, and Bernhardt.

Time will tell—time always does—and while the season advances Broadway and all the other amusement centers of the country will be treated to many usual and some unusual theatrical sights. They are bound to be entertaining because that is the business of plays and players.

One last word before the curtain is rung up on a new season. Commencing September the first, when the army of vacationists streams back into Gotham and all the other big and little towns of the country, the American playwright will have his innings.

The coming season is to see more new plays of native manufacture on the American stage than have any other two years.

Last season saw the "arrival" of three new playwrights-Eugene Walter, Margaret Mayo, and Charles Rann Kennedy-who contributed the three most interesting plays of the year. Within the next few weeks new dramatic works by each of them will be given a metropolitan hearing, Paul Armstrong and Charles Klein will be given another chance, William Vaughn Moody will show us a successor to "The Great Divide," George Broadhurst will follow "The Man of the Hour" with a racing play and a drama of the Canadian Northwest, George Ade will return temporarily to musical comedy with the assistance of Benjamin Hapgood Burt, George M. Cohan will become for the time being a writer of minstrel shows, Frederic Thompson will risk his adorable little wife, Mabel Taliaferro, in a new dramatic version of "Cinderella," and Paul Potter, Clyde Fitch, Henry Blossom, Edgar Selwyn, Harry B. Smith, Winchell Smith, William Gillette, and every other native dramatist of worth will step to the front with a smile, a bow, and a new play.

Notice, please, that the few names mentioned above are all American. True, Charles Frohman likes to gamble his money on plays which have already been tried out abroad, and as these plays are uniformly of foreign build there is sure to be a sprinkling of English and French dramatic work as long as he is a factor in American theatricals. But with the exception of Mr. Frohman's contributions our amusement menu for the next ten months will be largely domestic in nomenclature, locale. and manufacture. Besides Harry Lauder, Adeline Genèe, and Alice Lloyd, each of whom will be featured in a musical comedy, it is altogether likely that Madame Duse will be a foreign visitor to these shores before snow is on the ground. story of Madame Bernhardt's great success in her final tour of America had its effect last season in the fruitless visits of Novelli, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, and Madame Komischarzefsky, and now if Duse, a greater artist than any save Bernhardt, is anxious to at-tempt success where Mrs. Pat and the little Russian with the unpronounceable name failed, we can at least wish her the best of luck.

But American plays, American players, and American playwrights are to predominate, not because there has been any discrimination against foreigners, but because the American playgoing public has taken to its heart the dramas which deal closest with the life most familiar to it. That's the reason why we like our Augustus Thomases, our Eugene Walters, our George Broadhursts, our Charles Kleins, our Paul Armstrongs, our Margaret Mayos, and our William Gillettes, and now that these men and women have taken a tumble to themselves they are turning out plays which, crude though they may be, nevertheless vibrate with the clean, red blood of dramatic America. And they are making fortunes by doing this, just as George M. Cohan is making money by writing rough-and-tumble musical comedies which conform to the American love of speed, girls, and flagwaving, which latter is sometimes mis-

taken for patriotism.

One type of American play which all but monopolized the boards a couple of seasons ago will be in evidence very little this year. The Western play of the "Squaw Man," "Heir to the Hoorah," "Girl of the Golden West" sort has been overworked, and now it looks as if the setting for blood and thunder had been switched to the Canadian Northwest. At any rate, Eugene Walter's "The Wolf," George Broadhurst's "Conjurer's House" and Edgar Selwyn's dramatization of Sir Gilbert Parker's "Pierre and His People" would seem to point to the fact that the Hudson Bay district is about to be opened wide to playgoers. W. A. Fraser, too, has a play of the Northwest, and Rex Beach's "The Barrier" will soon be on the boards, so you see how the drama migrates ever and anon.

Paul Armstrong has been living in Annapolis for two years, and the result now shows itself in two naval plays, one his very own and the other written in conjunction with Frederic Thompson. Eugene Walter was for several years a newspaper reporter, and this experience made it possible for him to write his next play which will deal in a surprisingly analytical manner with life in the part of a city known sometimes as "Bohemia" and sometimes as the "Ten-

derloin.'

Man—even a playwright—is a creature of environment. As a writer writes most successfully of the things he knows best so do we, the playgoers, take our greatest interest in the things which most concern us. That's the reason for the American playwright, and it's also the reason for the American play.

FOR BOOK LOVERS



Archibald Lowery Sessions

The September Ainslee's a star number. Announcements for October. Mary Stewart Cutting's "The Wayfarers" not as satisfactory as her shorter work. A delightful new volume of short stories by O. Henry, "The Voice of the City." "The Daughter," by Constance Smedley, well written but rather too extravagant. Mary H. Vorse's "The Breaking In of a Yachtsman's Wife" a story to be read and enjoyed. An irrational and illogical conglomeration is "On a Margin," by Julius Chambers. Margaret Deland adds nothing to her reputation by "R. J.'s Mother and Some Other People." "The Stage Door," by Charles Belmont Davis, a collection of short stories not worth telling. "The Half Smart Set" rather interesting and fairly well written



E have been giving the readers of Ains-Lee's Magazine a series of numbers this summer, each one of which is as near perfection as we can approximate. If our judgment is of any

value at all, and we often have doubts about it of course, the reading public, at least that part of it which enjoys good fiction, ought to feel some satisfaction with the results of our attempts to give them what they need

to give them what they need.

We believe, with due modesty, that we have surpassed our previous efforts in the make-up of this September number. A casual glance at the table of contents ought to be enough to arrest attention, for it will show "The Veiled Mariposa," by Mrs. Wilson Woodrow, the complete novel, the conclusion of May Sinclair's serial, "The Immortal Moment," and short stories by Frank Danby, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Mary H. Vorse, Steel Williams and Johnson Morton. There is not an indifferent or poor story in the list; there is not a line of padding from beginning to end. Altogether we feel that this is literally a star number.

There are combined, in due proportions, romance and adventure, society, love, humor, the West, army life, human problems, all presented most attractively and with a regard for literary standards which is highly creditable to the authors, and, if we may say so, to AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE.

Those who like what is presented here will be equally pleased with the October number. Departing from the custom which has hitherto been an invariable one we shall begin in October a two-part serial which will take the place of the complete novel. We do this chiefly because the story which we have selected is a very remarkable one, and is too long to run in one number. It is a new novel by Edith Macvane, and is distinctly different from those with a French color, which she has hitherto written. "The Thoroughbred" is a New York story with a society and a Wall Street setting, and goes from one climax to another, keeping the interest at the highest tension all the time.

A most extraordinary short story will be one called "Red War," by Will Levington Comfort. Other short stories are by Mary H. Vorse, Morgan Robertson, Wilmot Price, Charles N. Buck, Daniel Steele, Quentin M. Drake, J. Frank Davis and J. W. Marshall.

The articles on Bridge Whist, which were begun in the August number, will be continued; the next one, and perhaps the most interesting thus far, be-

ing that for October.

It is also worth while to call attention specially to Quentin M. Drake's series of stories of army life. The author is a former army officer who has seen a great deal of service and knows all about his subject.



The McClure Company has recently published Mary Stewart Cutting's first novel under the title of "The Wayfarers." In general character it is not unlike her short stories; the people are very much the same, and there is the same atmosphere of the suburban home and home problems.

It must be said that it is not nearly as satisfactory as the author's shorter work; the handling of the details is too discursive and superficial; the thread of the story is lost in the mass of episodes, and the reader becomes wearied in the effort to keep in mind the connection

of events.

In the beginning one is rather led to expect that it is to be the story of Justin Alexander's new business venture which he is induced to undertake with the backing of Martin & Leverich. Even here, by the way, there is a great deal of uncertainty as to just what the arrangement was and why the two capitalists made it. We look for complications in his business and their reactions on his family life. But before we get far into the story these things are dropped out of sight and young Theodosia Linden is brought into the foreground. The narrative then oscillates between this young girl's interests and those of the Alexander family, with nothing very conclusive about either, and the general result is a feeling of dissatisfaction with Justin, due, we think, to the fact that his attitude toward his family is not at all what we should naturally expect from a man of his type.

Girard Bailey is another character in whom we might become very much interested, but he is unaccountably kept very much in the background.

The book should have been rewritten before publication with an eye to condensation and clarity.

. . .

Another new volume of short stories by O. Henry will be welcome news to the rapidly increasing number of his admirers. "The Voice of the City" is the name of the new book, and it is published by the McClure Company.

Readers of AINSLEE'S need no information about the character or merit of his work. His first stories appeared in this magazine and he has been writing for us ever since, a period of something over six years. Two of the best stories in this latest collection, "While the Auto Waits" and "The Memento," were first published in AINSLEE's, and as to the former, at least, it is the opinion of many people that he has never done anything better. Two others that are conspicuously good are "The Harbinger" and "The Lickpenny Lover."

We do not want to weary our readers by a reiteration of our views of O. Henry's stories. Many times expressed, they will be more interested in that of *The Bookman* in which it is said in the July number: "The man is in many respects an extraordinary workman and a consummate artist."

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"The Daughter," by Constance Smedley, published by Moffet, Yard & Company, is obviously a book written, if not actually with a purpose, at least with a hope of turning to account a question of considerable public interest.

In some respects the story is one of wild improbability. We all know, of course, in our personal experiences, of extraordinary performances on the part of enthusiastic young persons and of the fervor of self-sacrifice that sometimes is manifested by immature old persons, but Delia Willett's experiment

in matrimony is almost too extravagant even for a young woman of her temperament. Socialism and woman suffrage bring out some queer traits in their devotees, just as did the cause of abolition, or any other movement for human freedom, but it has been left for Miss Smedley to suggest the willingness of a refined and educated woman to contract a marriage—in form merely—with a strange man and live with him as a condition of securing money to further the plans of her socialist associates.

The book is well written, of course, and any one who can swallow this one incident will find it entertaining. There are many good things in the dialogue. The characters are all well drawn, especially the worldly-wise Aunt Billy, the thoroughly British Mr. Willett, Delia's father, and the suffragette, Mrs. Dickerson, who, in spite of her strength of mind, is deliciously feminine in her view of Delia.

One need only be an average guesser to anticipate the conclusion.

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Readers of AINSLEE's have had considerable entertainment in reading Mrs. Mary H. Vorse's Jimmy Preston stories, and in her first book, "The Breaking In of a Yachtsman's Wife," published by Houghton, Mifflin & Company, they will not be disappointed.

Though, of course, the book is very different in theme from the short stories, yet it shows very much the same traits of authorship. It is her keen appreciation of the possibilities of the commonplace things of life, metamorphosed by an indomitable sense of humor from dreary and wearisome routine, that makes her work refreshing, original, and altogether entertaining.

The title of the book suggests a good deal, the yachtsman's absorption in his enthusiasm which makes him seem, on a boat, a man utterly different from the one his wife has hitherto known; the wife's resolution to share with him that enthusiasm and the unexpected difficulties she encounters, mainly in her husband's thinly veiled contempt for

her ignorance. But the charm of the story lies in the telling, and no review can hope to give an adequate idea of it. The book must be read to be appreciated and will amply repay the time spent upon it.

A considerable strain is put upon the patience and some other virtues by a book called "On a Margin," written by Julius Chambers and published by Mitchell Kennerly.

One cannot help wondering about the standards of criticism which lead to the publication of such a story. Ignorance of his subject may be forgiven an author of frankly sensational "romance"—a field in which facts count for little—provided there is a reasonable amount of skill shown in the construction of a connected plot.

This book is supposed to be "a romantic and remarkable story of Wall Street manipulation." That sufficiently explains its character, and if any reader is so devoted to the Wall Street story that he cares little about how it is told he will be satisfied. It is an irrational and illogical conglomeration of disconnected incidents, in which the characters appear to be hurrying, without purpose from one thing to another, and will leave most readers in a pitiful state of mental confusion.

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It is impossible not to feel that "R. J.'s Mother and Some Other People," by Margaret Deland, published by Harper & Brothers, would have been better left unpublished, for it will not add anything to the author's reputation. It is a book—we were about to say short stories, but that term hardly applies to the six tales contained in the volume, which average over fifty pages each.

The difficulty with them is that they have hardly enough substance to make them worth while, and one feels, on finishing them, that there has been very little to tell, certainly not at such length.

If any one should care to undertake the task of reading the book we would suggest that he omit "The Norman," "The House of Rimmon," and "The White Feather," for he will find it an utter waste of time to struggle through them. Of the others, "Many Waters," "R. J.'s Mother," and "The Black Drop" are readable, in the order named, though all of them are much overwritten. "Many Waters" might have been made, by proper condensation, an exceedingly strong tale, and even as it stands it is rather impressive.

Such commendation as can honestly be given to these three, however, is subject to the qualification that they are unpleasant and leave a rather bitter taste

in the mouth.

"The Half Smart Set" is the title published anonymously by Frederick A. Stokes Company.

It is said to be the work of a wellknown author "whose books have sold many large editions," and we can only guess at the reasons which led to the suppression of his-or her-identity.

It is an English love-story, the people in it belonging to the wealthy middle classes, who, as the title implies, are devoted to the same pursuit of pleasure that occupies all the time and thought of their betters. It is interesting, with a fairly good plot, not of striking originality and reasonably well constructed and written.

Its main attraction is the character of Patricia, the heroine, a young woman whose normal and healthy instincts keep her from being spoiled by the corroding influence of her surroundings and who, in spite of her revolt against the artificialities of her life, is saved from any disastrous consequences.

A volume of short stories by Charles Belmont Davis is published by Charles Scribner's Sons under the title of "The Stage Door."

There are ten in the collection, and though they are classified as fiction they can hardly be called stories in the strict sense of the word, for no one of them possesses the essential characteristic of a story; that is, there is no story to tell.

The first one in the book, "Everyman's Riddle," is typical of them all, A man who comes upon a railroad wreck soon after the catastrophe, observes a young fellow badly injured who, lying on the ground, takes a newspaper clipping from his pocket and after intently examining it throws it away. Soon after he is carried off and sub-sequently dies. The observer, who tells the story, picks up the clipping which shows the portraits and names of three well-known women. He ascertains the name of the dead man, and to satisfy his curiosity calls upon the three women in succession and notifies them of the young man's death. If there is any point to the tale at all it may be supposed to be in the manner in which each woman receives the news, but in this respect it is vague and disappointing.

The same criticism holds as to the other nine; they all leave the reader with the feeling that they were hardly

worth telling.



Important New Books.

"Together," Robert Herrick, Macmillan "Redemption," René Bazin, Charles Scrib-

ner's Sons.
"Sowing Seeds in Danny," Nellie L. Mc-

Clung, Doubleday, Page & Co.
"The Last Duchess of Belgarde," Molly
Elliot Seawell, D. Appleton & Co.

'The Green Mummy," Fergus Hume, G.

W. Dillingham.
"The Sunny Side of the Hill," Rosa Nou-'The Mystery of the Yellow Room," Gas-

ton Leroux, Brentano's.
"Vigorous Danot," Ambrose Pratt, R. F.

Fenno & Co. "The Circular Staircase," Mary R. Rine-

hart, Bobbs-Merrill Co. "Villa Rubein," John Galsworthy, G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"Captain Love," Theodore Roberts, L. C. Page & Co.

"Into the Primitive," Robert Ames Ben-

net, A. C. McClurg & Co. "By Wild Waves Tossed," Captain Jack

Brand, McClure Co.
"The Five Knots," Fred M. White, Little, Brown & Co.

"Zollenstein," W. B. M. Ferguson, D. Appleton & Co.



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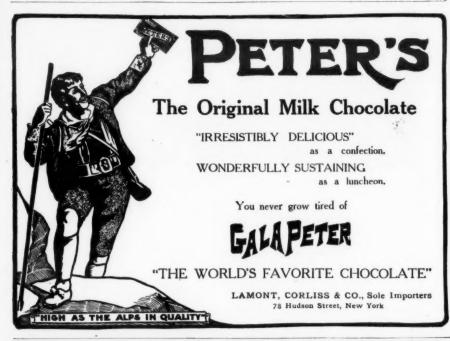
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A No. 020 IDEAL Boiler and 262 ft, of 38-in. AMERICAN Radiators, coting the owner \$177, were used to Steam-Heat this cottage, at which price the goods can be bought of any reputable, competent Fitter. This did not include cost of labor, pipe, valves, freight, etc., which installation is extra and varies according to climatic and other conditions.

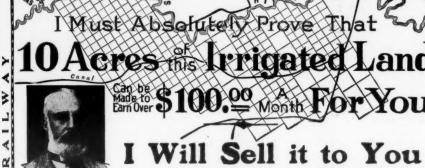


A No. 3-22 IDEAL Boller and 400 ft. of 38-in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing the owner \$234, were used to Hot-Water heat this cottage, at which price the goods can be bought of any reputable, competent Fitter. This did not include cost of labor, pipe, valves, freight, etc., which installation sextra and varies according to climatic and other conditions.



A No. 015 IDEAL Boiler and 175 ft. of 38-in. AMERICAN Radiators, cotting the owner \$116, were used to 8team-Heat this cottage, at which price the goods can be bought of any reputable, competent Fitter. This did not include cost of labor, pipe, valves, reight, etc., which installation is extra and varies according to climatic and other conditions.





Geo. E. Barstow President.

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the land.
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New Safe Land Plan

New Safe Land Plan

I will deliver at once to the Citiren's Bate Enk of Barrior, Texas, a Warrant's Hod to ten creed the best of the Peces Valley Land and Irrigation Company as per the subdivision of the Company's property made by John Wilson and filed for record with the County Clerk of Ward Land Gontreed with the County Clerk of Ward Land Gontreed and will deliver it to you have possible to the Bank—on the contract appears a certificate signed by an Officer of the Bank and certifying that the Bank has your deed and will deliver it to you was a proper of the Bank and certifying that the Bank has your deed and will deliver it to you was a proper of the Bank and certifying that the Bank will deliver it to you was a proper of the Bank and the second Land Contract, The Bank acts as an independent agent for both of us—to guarantee fair play.

To the Bank will of us—to guarantee the Bank will defect to you was week man and the week in monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual payments.

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Sit down and \$3. week, paid regularly, and the interest credits, will mature your Contract in a little over two and three-form of the paying the same total amount, \$455, in a day, a month, at months, a year, or in any less time than \$3, year, and whenever your regular receipts and your interest allowance credit receipts total \$458, all you have to tract to the Citisen's State Bank at Barriow, Texas, together with twenty-eight vendor lien notes each for \$90, payable one every three months for seven years.

The Bank will then give you your warranty beed to the tully irrigated and all under cultivation.

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for \$3.00 a Week

Tou get this land foresets, which you can pay in less than three years—slid down and \$3 a wesk—and you then have only four \$8 notes each year for seven years to pay out of your income.

Can you hope in any other way, so safe and sure as this, to have so large an independent income in so short at the the best of the parties. The self-set is the parties of the parti

His income is practically uncounsed by managements with a living and peace of mind are not depriment upon the will have a make his little ten acres earn as much as a quarter section (160 acres) unirrigated, would produce—as much as between twenty and eightly thousand dollars in eash would bring, loaned out at 8 per cent.

John of the section of the section of the section of the section and churches—in fact, all the comforts and conveniences of life that come with the prosperous close-kait community, though they pass by the great isolated farm.

The land I want you to buy is all good rich soil, irrigated from Canals and bluckes aircady constructed in the most aperior of the section of the

& Facific Italiway and the recoverant the uncertain quantity — moisture—sliminated, arriculture and borticulture can here be scientifically carried on to the splendid profit of the land warried on to the splendid profit of the land Safeguarded

borticulture can here be scientifically carried on to the spinning profit of the iand owner.

Aliver your deed en your \$3.00 a the spinning profit of the iand owner.

But all talk \$3.00 a the spinning profit of the year other way superior hay, grain, cotton, vegetables and fruits are equaled in only a very few favored spot of the year observed by many to be even better — variety for variety—than those raised to have a spinning to make it clear to you that you can have an assured independent living income in iese than three years if you can be write for it. Will you do that today, even if you can't commence right away! I want the address of every man or woman who is willing to save its a week if I can prove that the result will be financial independence in less than three short years.

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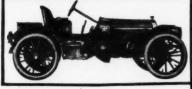
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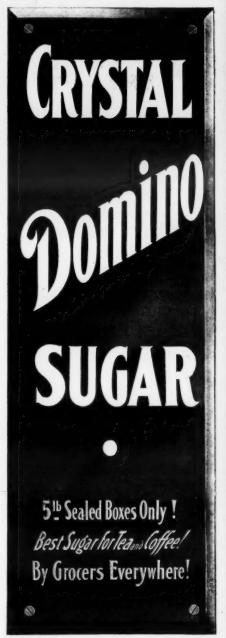




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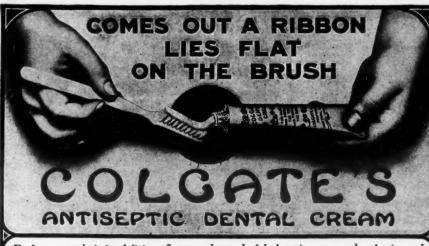
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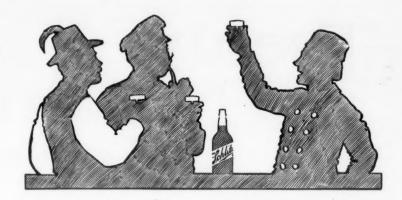
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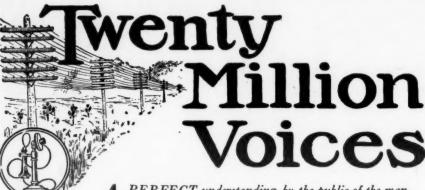
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And to make the telephone system useful to

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keep you alert and ready at this end of the wire.

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to make each one of you a better link in the chain.
First, give "Central" the number clearly and be
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Next, don't grow fretful because you think she represents a monopoly. The postmaster does, too, for the same reason.

The usefulness of the telephone is its universality, as one system. Where there are two systems you must have two telephones—and confusion.

Remember, the value of the service lies in the number of people you can reach without confusion-the promptness with which you get your

So respond quickly when others call you, bearing in mind the extensive scope of the service.

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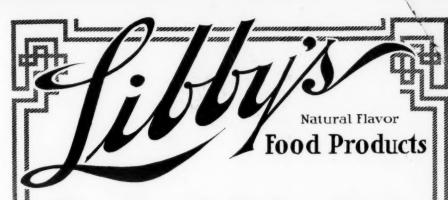
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